DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 023 CS 508 933

AUTHOR O'Brien, Jennifer
TITLE It's Written in Our Head: The Possibilities and Contradictions of a Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse in a Junior Primary Classroom.
PUB DATE Jul 94
NOTE 154p.; Master of Education Thesis, University of South Australia.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Communication; Classroom Environment; Communication Research; Discourse Analysis; *Feminism; Foreign Countries; Primary Education; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Instruction; *Sex Differences; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Australia; *Communication Behavior; Critical Pedagogy; Discourse Communities; *Poststructuralism

ABSTRACT

A study examined from a feminist poststructuralist perspective the discourses available in a classroom using a critical pedagogy, based on a belief that teaches need to make it possible for their students to question the social world constructed in texts. The teacher of an Australian junior primary classroom (with students age five to eight) took as her starting point a critically-based literature advocating the introduction of a critical discourse into classrooms. The teacher also took into account the impact of poststructuralist prediction of multiplicity, contradiction and possibility on research and pedagogical positions. To scrutinize the discursive practices around this critical pedagogy, the teacher/researcher made multiple readings around two fiction texts, revealing both the contradictory discourses and the possibilities available in a classroom where a critical pedagogy with a feminist poststructuralist emphasis underpinned reading instruction. Results indicated that: (1) the critical discourse the teacher made available was taken up differentially by girls and by boys; (2) students' existing practices associated with old positions concerning the meaning in the texts were preserved; and (3) some girls did take up new, socially-critical positions. Findings suggest both problematic aspects and possibilities for change of introducing into the classroom a new discourse which both problematized existing discursive practices; and where, at the same time, these existing discourses were taken for granted. (Contains 37 references. Appendixes present both texts, an entry in a planning journal, a classroom chart, samples of students' writing and drawing, and a transcript of a discussion of a text.) (RS)

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IT'S WRITTEN IN OUR HEAD

The possibilities and contradictions of a feminist poststructuralist discourse in a junior primary classroom.

Jennifer O'Brien

BA (Syd) **Grad Dip Teacher Librarianship** (SACAE) **Grad Dip Education (Language and Literacy Education)**

(University of South Australia)

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Language and Literacy specialisation) at the University of South Australia, in July 1994.

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I certify that the thesis entitled ***IT'S WRITTEN IN OUR HEAD:*** **The Possibilities and contradictions of a feminist poststructuralist discourse in a junior primary classroom** and submitted for the degree of **Master of Education** is the result of my own research except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of it) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other institution.

Signed: Jennifer O'Brien

Date: 23 July 1994.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A number of friends, colleagues and family members helped during the preparation of this study. My first acknowledgment must be of my supervisor, Helen Nixon's, contribution to this work. Apart from her constant support and encouragement, and quiet insistence on the highest standards, Helen sent my explorations of the materials into exciting directions, helping me to make some new and important connections. My special thanks go also to Barbara Comber, Susie O'Brien and Ruth Smith for friendship, encouragement, time for talking ideas, advice and expertise of all kinds. I want to thank Mick and Katie O'Brien for their patience, technological expertise and love. Finally I want to thank the students with whom I worked, played and laughed in 1992.

SUMMARY

This project had its origins in a theory / research / pedagogical nexus. I made use of the complex interrelationships thus established to examine the critical pedagogy I made available in my classroom. I took as my starting point critically-based literature advocating the introduction of a critical discourse into classrooms. I took into account also the impact of a poststructuralist prediction of multiplicity, contradiction and possibility on research and pedagogical positions.

As teacher / researcher I examined from a feminist poststructuralist perspective the discourses available in my own classroom using a critical pedagogy, based on a belief that teachers need to make it possible for their students to question the social world constructed in texts, planned and taught around two fiction texts.

In order to scrutinise the discursive practices around this critical pedagogy, I made multiple readings around these lessons, revealing both the contradictory discourses and the possibilities available in a classroom where a critical pedagogy with a feminist poststructuralist emphasis underpinned reading instruction.

The study revealed both problematic aspects and possibilities for change of introducing into my classroom a new discourse which both problematised existing discursive practices; and where, at the same time, these existing discourses were taken-for-granted.

Chapter One

THEORY / RESEARCH / PRACTICE NEXUS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I review the critically-based literature, linking theory, research and pedagogical change which inspired me to introduce a critical discourse into my junior primary classroom; at the same time I discuss how the poststructuralist prediction of multiplicity, confusion, contradiction and possibility impacted on my research and pedagogical positions.

I take a position as critical practitioner / researcher / student, looking back at the issues raised for me in feminist poststructuralist theory, feminist poststructuralist pedagogy, critical pedagogy and feminist poststructuralist methodology. I reflect on how the action I took in my classroom was interwoven with my continued reading in my areas of interest. At the same time I point to the gaps I uncovered in theory and practice and show how I drew on a theory / practice nexus to investigate some of these gaps.

The account I give of my reading, reflection and action is neither linear nor developmental; instead, it forms **spirals** of interrelated theorising and practice as I uncover some of the key issues that drove both my classroom action and this present study.

I start this chapter with an overview in which I locate my reading, my changed classroom practice and this study in my positionings as teacher, researcher and student. In the subsequent sections of the chapter, I consider the complex interrelationships around theory, research and practice which are the focus of this

study. I do this by incorporating into a loose narrative of my recent teaching experience a discussion of the key issues underpinning pedagogical change in the following areas:

- Language, subjectivity and discourse
- Discursive formation of gendered difference
- Social production of the literate subject
- Poststructuralist techniques: The way forward
- Research / methodology / pedagogy nexus.

The narrative is marked by *italics*.

OVERVIEW

THEORY, RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE

As a woman, a teacher, a feminist and a university student, my exploration of the practices around classroom texts started with a concern about what happens to girls in their schooling. I found that analyses from feminist poststructuralist perspectives firstly offered understandings about the social contexts in which gender identities are constructed, and strategies for taking action; and secondly problematised the instructional practices that incorporate gendered relations. Analyses of these practices (including the construction of teacher and student roles, of successful student readers and of literacy as a neutral skill or an ability) provided starting places for thinking and acting in new ways about what happens in classrooms, particularly in literacy lessons. The poststructuralist techniques used for scrutinising classroom practice in turn made available new ways for me to tackle the socio-political inequities constructed in and by the texts used in junior primary classroom. At the same time I found that arguments grounded in an emancipatory pedagogy, critiquing current

conceptualisations of literacy, offered a further dimension for my task of reframing literacy teaching.

Insights from theorists, researchers and practitioners thus provided me with starting places for making profound changes in the discourses available in my classroom:

- I aimed to raise with my students questions about the versions of the social world, particularly the inequities in gender relations, constructed in and by their classroom texts.
- I decided to problematise the authority relations between teacher and students which resulted in the teacher's textual reading being preferred to that of her students (Baker and Freebody 1989).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE

Eighteen months after introducing this critical position into my classroom, I designed a research project. In order to look critically at the changes I had implemented, I planned:

- to select a number of recordings of reading instruction episodes accumulated during that eighteen months
- to analyse teacher and student talk and activities around the selected texts
- to use my findings as a possible basis for making further changes in the way I positioned myself and my students in reading lessons.

However, as I explain in detail in Chapter Two, my understandings of the implications of a feminist poststructuralist position on classroom research evolved during the course of this study with the consequence that I began to take into account in my readings of the data my multiple roles as university student / researcher / critical practitioner. I came to see the multiplicity of these positionings as central to this

classroom discourses rather than just strategies implemented for a critical literacy.

The intersection of my positionings in the classroom provided the dynamic place where reading, reflection and classroom action met and acted on each other, informing further action, reading, and reflection. At the same time, however, this study was static in the sense that, in order to give an account of my analysis of classroom practices, I had to pin down moments, episodes, texts. Different analyses, different readings would have been available the next day, around a different text, with a different group of students, following my reading of different research studies. I aimed in this study to take into account these complexities, to give a sense of the fluidity, of the contradictions, of the multiple possibilities of a classroom enterprise which introduced a new and challenging discourse around that familiar aspect of junior primary classroom methodology: the reading aloud session.

LANGUAGE, SUBJECTIVITY AND DISCOURSE

In 1989 I was seconded from my position as a teacher-librarian to take on the role of teacher-educator. In 1990 as a Master of Education student, I began to read feminist poststructuralist critiques of girls' gendered experiences in schooling. These studies raised issues of the central place of language in the formation of gendered subjectivities and the gendered construction of characters in children's school books and, for me as a primary school teacher, the question of what action I could take (Gilbert 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989; Davies 1985, 1988, 1989; Clark 1989; Gilbert and Rowe 1989; Adams and Walkerdine 1986).

I next explored in more detail feminist poststructuralist views of language as the place where social possibilities are defined and contested; and where our sense of ourselves as persons is constructed; and as the central place where struggles over power occur. I made the connection to classrooms and particularly to the use of texts in reading lessons, taking the view that teaching practices as sites of disunity and conflict could offer the potential both to produce change and to preserve the status quo (Weedon 1987). When I returned to teaching, I drew on key ideas, explicated below, to frame radical change in my classroom practice.

Poststructuralist theory identifies language as the common factor in its analysis of both social and individual power and consciousness.

> Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed*. ... Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices — economic, social and political — the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power. (Weedon 1987: 21)

A feminist use of the poststructuralist theories of **language** as **subjectivity** provided a way for me into understanding power relations — particularly gender relations and teacher / student relations — and identifying possibilities for change. Following Weedon's representation of **discourses** as standing for "political interests and in consequence ... constantly vying for status and power" (Weedon 1987: 40–41), I reconceptualised my classroom as one of the myriad sites of this discursive battle for power and thus made the decisions to scrutinise the language practices there and at the same time to explore the theory, studies and critiques of how the discursive construction of power in classrooms positioned teachers and students, particularly girls.

Feminist poststructuralism draws on a concept of **discourse** in order to "explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it" (Weedon 1987: 41). This position opens up the possibility of considering how individuals are constructed and reconstructed by a variety of discursive practices. Individuals learn the discursive practices of a society and position themselves within those practices in different ways. Students in a classroom, for example, are offered subject positions in the various discourses present at any one time which assume what it is to be a girl student or a boy student and consequently offer differential ways of being and behaving. Similarly, teachers are positioned by and position themselves within the discursive practices available to them (Weedon 1987). In contrast with the humanistic view which sees us as the relatively fixed products of our socialisation, the concept of discursive construction

of identity shows us as constantly changing complex creatures engaged in dealing with the contradictions of everyday life (Davies 1989). Poststructuralist theory allowed me to both acknowledge and to focus on the many different subject positionings and the contradictory nature of many of the positions which individuals take up during reading lessons. I explain in a later section my reasons for focusing on literacy instruction and indeed on practices around texts.

In addition, while determining to make available in my classroom a position of critical analysis, I found the following claim of Weedon's about the individual to be a source of inspiration and hope:

> (she) exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices ... able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to choose from the options available. (Weedon 1987: 125)

Later, it also became a position from which I could scrutinise the materials for this project.

In the next section I review key literature by theorists who reconceptualised gender differences as discursively achieved and explicate a poststructuralist concept of the central place of language in their analyses of individuals and power in society. This literature gave me new ways of viewing and therefore dealing with gender issues in my classroom (Weedon 1987).

DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF GENDERED DIFFERENCE

I found the investigations of theory-based researchers and practitioners into the power inequities associated with girls' and boys' differential positioning in classrooms and in texts particularly helpful in understanding the discursive formation of gendered difference in classrooms and in formulating plans for

change. My discussion focuses firstly on teacher / student relations and secondly on teacher / student / text relations.

TEACHER / STUDENT RELATIONS

Teachers' constructions of "girls" — that is, teachers' assumptions, perceptions and practices with regard to how girls behave, how they learn, how they interact with others, how they see themselves, how they are different from boys, and how they get to be the way they are — arise from using gender as the defining category for describing how individuals are as persons. The practices implicated in this position give rise to differential and unequal treatment of girls and boys. In order to begin to make a difference to these inequities, the poststructuralist technique of rendering problematic the taken-for-granted notions of gender can make it possible to examine from a feminist perspective two assumptions about the nature of individuals commonly held by teachers (Adams and Walkerdine, 1986; Clark 1989; Davies 1988; Walkerdine, 1981).

The first assumption is that biology gives rise to gender differences. This explanation allows teachers to see gender typed behaviour as "natural"; it seems right, for example, for female student teachers to write children's stories from a boy's point of view, to portray boys as the active protagonists (Gilbert 1985). The differences between boys and girls do not rise naturally, however. They are socially constructed, that is, they arise from the different experiences boys and girls have, from the different ways they are constructed through language and from the different subject positions offered to them by society. Teachers need to examine the assumptions that surround the gendered activities in their classrooms in order to recognise that many of their practices validate and construct stereotypical differences. Many teachers claim that all children should be treated the same; yet

they treat girls differently on the basis of the assumptions they make about how they are as girls (Davies 1985, 1988; Clark 1989; Gilbert and Rowe 1989).

A second "commonsense" assumption is that girls are the way they are through the workings of the process of socialisation. Girls are thus characterised as the relatively passive products of a process which happens **to** them. Teachers need new ways of considering their classroom practice which allow them to examine critically the problematic assumptions underpinning socialisation theory, such as the belief that adults' ways of operating are sufficiently clear for children to take away a particular message and the belief that children are not active agents able to steer their way through these contradictory messages. Girls are, in fact, engaged in struggles; teachers need to look for these and to encourage girls to resist manipulation (Gilbert 1983, 1988, 1989; Davies 1988; Adams and Walkerdine 1986).

TEACHER / STUDENT / TEXT RELATIONS

The discursively constructed relationship between teachers, students and texts was the focus of the theorised investigations of another group of researchers and practitioners whose analyses of the construction of the gender inequities in and by **texts** showed where classroom action was needed.

Gilbert and Rowe (1989) analysed the ways in which male and female characters were constructed in a series of texts written especially for very young readers. They found that the gender bias in these texts, incorporating power inequalities between women and men, reflected gender bias in the everyday world: in television, in newspapers, in advertising, in consumer goods (1989: 19). Gilbert and Rowe rejected an explanation that "naturalised" this state of affairs, that is to say, that explained gender bias as arising naturally from the essentially different nature of girls and boys. Instead, they theorised that the way girls and boys are, is constructed

in and by society through language practices. **The importance of this analysis for me as a teacher intending to link theory, research and practice was that socially constructed practices could be analysed, considered and reconstructed differently by me and my students.**

Baker and Freebody (1989) also took up the issues of gendered texts and classroom action. In a research commentary where they drew attention to the constraints imposed by gender-definitions produced by children's early reading texts, they suggested that teachers should show their students that "gender attributions and relations are themselves problems for both characters and readers" (1989: 203).

Gilbert and Rowe (1989) argued that it was important for teachers to go beyond awareness of the construction of gender; they called for action, claiming that teachers should have strategies for placing this on the agenda. Instead of merely replacing books with a gender bias, they should review texts, consider the sorts of gender constructions the texts might contribute to and how best to use them. They made an important new claim regarding reading instruction: that texts could be used to show students how to read critically; they might, in fact, be used to make social inequities tangible (1989: 81).

I found an irresistible challenge in these calls for introducing a critical discourse into practices around classroom reading lessons. However, as a student and educator intending to return to teaching in an early childhood classroom, I faced the task of finding ways of making material these exhortations for change.

In the next section I discuss one critical theoretical position on the politics of literacy and one key pedagogical research study on which I drew when considering the introduction of a critically framed discourse into my next classroom. The recommendations made in these works raised yet again the gap between knowing what needed to be done and how to do it. The research studies available to me

called on teachers to alter fundamentally the relationships between themselves, their students and their texts; taking classroom action meant that I had to put new practices in place around texts. A new discursive construction of the literate subject was called for; but theory–based studies of early childhood classrooms where such changes had taken place were not available. **In my research project I took up the challenge to conduct a critical investigation into the implementation of a critical discourse in my own junior primary classroom.**

SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF THE LITERATE SUBJECT: POWER RELATIONS IN CLASSROOMS

I continued to work as a teacher educator while exploring literature which made a link between research and literacy pedagogy. My particular interest lay in studies which drew on socially critical positions in order to critique current conceptualisations of literacy and to scrutinise the social production of student readers in and through texts and classroom instructional practices, particularly those around reading.

In this section I review theoretical positions and theory–based work which, like the previously described analyses of gendered practices around texts, went beyond analysis to the openly ideological position (Lather 1991a) that change in classroom practices was required. Each of these studies, while taking broadly socially critical positions, had a different starting point. Lankshear began with a critical analysis of the power relations around literacy; Baker and Freebody (1989) made unequal power relations in reading lessons the basis of their call for the reconceptualisation of literacy instruction. Patterson (1991) critiqued the study of literature from a feminist poststructuralist position.

POWER RELATIONS AROUND LITERACY

Lankshear's critical analysis of the politics of literacy allowed me to make links between my aim of transforming gender classroom relations and the inequities of

the world outside the classroom. He argued that power in society is structured unequally, that competing interest groups pursue their interests from positions of greater advantage or disadvantage in terms of the power available to them. His claim that the practices around reading and writing are integral to this social practice of the pursuit of power and evolve within it, explicitly directed me to an examination of literacy instruction (1989: 225). Lankshear argued that literacy was not a single, neutral abstraction; rather he distinguished two opposing practices: "proper" and "improper" literacies (1989: 72) The first of these denoted the struggle of subordinate groups to practise forms of literacy enabling them to undertake political action aimed at structural change. The second referred to the retention by dominant groups of their position; here the literacies practised by subordinate groups were less effective than those of the powerful (1989: 72). As an outcome of this analysis, particular literacies, including those available in classrooms, needed to be identified and understood in terms of their potential for "either reproducing or challenging prevailing patterns of structured power and the hierarchies of interest and advantage sustained within them." (1989: 226)

For me, as a practitioner seeking to underpin critically-based change with theorised positions, Lankshear's questions: What are the most important (or 'real') uses of reading and writing? Whose interests are best served by the ways literacy is conceived and practised? (1989: 74) drew my attention to the power relationships constructed in all literacy encounters, including those in classrooms, and raised the further question: What action needs be taken?

This call for reconsideration of classroom literacy practice — with the aim of offering students and teachers the tools to achieve control over their lives and to transform a world where "class, gender, race, age, cultural and ethnic relations reflect differentials of power" (1989: 74) — resonated with my plans to introduce a critical discourse around texts when I returned to classroom teaching. Later, when

practising a critical discourse, I drew on feminist poststructuralist critiques of Lankshear's version of an emancipatory pedagogy to reflect on its tendency to simplify the complexities of the power relations in classrooms and schools (Lather 1991a, 1991b; Weedon 1987). **This is an issue which I take up in Chapter Three where I make multiple readings of some events whilst using a critical discourse in a junior primary classroom**.

POWER RELATIONS AROUND CLASSROOM TEXTS

My attention had been drawn initially to the possibilities available in using classroom texts to scrutinise the construction of gendered individuals. Lankshear showed the possibilities in reconsidering the construction of literacy in classrooms. I now show how Luke (1991), Baker (1989, 1991) and Freebody (1989) rendered problematic the production of literate students, *via* their critique of power relations in classroom reading lessons.

Reading pedagogy and school-literacy

School books and "classroom talk around texts" are "a key means for constructing what counts as literacy and the literate person"; this is because all models of literacy teaching share a belief that knowledge can be "recorded and recovered across generations in 'official' texts" (Luke 1991: 88). Baker and Freebody's research into reading pedagogy in early childhood classrooms was underpinned by the related notions that reading is "widely regarded as the most central objective of early schooling" (1989: xiii) and that through their earliest school books children are "introduced to the culture of literacy as that culture is effected in our schools." (1989: xviii) Their view of literacy was central to this study. Like Lankshear, they challenged the notion of literacy being regarded as a "unitary abstraction" (1989: xi); they preferred that literacy be seen as "sets of practical activities engaged in by many different people in many different interpersonal and

cultural contexts." (1989: xi) The version of literacy acquired by school students was "school-literacy". Baker's position on school literacy questioned whether classroom reading practices, which "created their own discourses and orders of knowledge: ... about the interiors of stories and about world-knowledge, but not about texts" (1991: 15), could count as literacy at all, "if literacy is understood as methods for talking about, characterising, and analysing *texts* as such" (1991: 15).

The production of student readers

I now focus on

- Baker and Freebody's (1989) findings about the production of young readers in and by early reading instructional practices: the power of teacher authority and of textual authority
- Patterson's (1991) feminist poststructuralist critique of the humanist individualist discourses around older children's texts.

At the same time I discuss the implications

- for my plans to adopt a socially critically position in my classroom
- for my position as a researcher taking a feminist poststructuralist stance.

Under the heading *"Critical literacy"* (Chapter One: 16, this study) I consider some of the recommendations made by researchers concerned that their work will "make a difference" (for example, Baker and Freebody 1989; Patterson 1991; Freebody and Luke 1990; Gilbert 1989).

Teacher authority

Baker and Freebody's investigation showed that reading instruction in the early years of schooling played a critical role in introducing young children to a central understandings about the acquisition of school-literacy, namely the inescapability

of the power relations — encompassing gender, age, race and class — around students, teachers and texts. Whatever instructional practices were employed by teachers, students learned about the "relative status of teacher and student with respect to textual knowledge". This knowledge included the teacher's expertise as a reader and analyst of texts, "the forms and location of school knowledge, and the relative status of their own contributions to classroom talk"; in short, teacher authority determined student readings (1989: 183).

Critical analysis of the transcripts of early reading lessons revealed, for example, extensive question and answer sessions based on early childhood texts. Baker and Freebody observed in these sessions how broad was teacher authority and how hard students had to work to access whatever logic underlay these discussions and to work out how they related to the words or the story. In addition, the pervasive practices of calling on students to imagine, guess and infer what was to happen next; and of calling on students' knowledge and feelings in order to make learning more student–centred seemed not only to take them further away from the text, but to extend the reach of schooling into personal and social areas of students' life (1989: 181). Baker and Freebody concluded that reading lessons were in fact lessons in school culture: no attention was paid to whether any students could or could not read the words (1989: 182). Considering these findings as a practitioner, it seemed to me that the discourse around texts which I introduced into my next classroom would need to include attention not only to producing students as socially critical text analysts, but as code breakers, as meaning makers and as text users (Freebody and Luke 1990).

Textual authority

Baker and Freebody's analysis raised the way early reading materials were used to constitute children's knowledge as subordinate to text knowledge. They

demonstrated that, partly as result of the nature of the reading materials and partly as a result of the classroom discourse conducted around the materials, "childhood, as a social identity and status, is appropriated and further accomplished in and for early schooling" (1989: 175). When acquiring school-literacy students learned about how adults — both teachers and writers — constructed their interests and capacities as children; and they learned how far they were able to go when interpreting texts.

Individualist discourses

In her critique of humanist individualist discourses (as played out, for example, in reader-response approaches currently available in upper primary and secondary English classrooms) Patterson (1991) took a stance similar to Baker's and Freebody's (1989). She explained that these discourses had become naturalised so that although their practices operated as specific reading / writing practices, they did not announce themselves as such. She too argued for a critical discourse which would not only problematise the intrusive nature of child-centred practices and their failure to produce a "socio-cultural response" (Patterson 1991: 249) but also recognise the need to denaturalise classroom literacy practices.

The findings considered above revealed not only the complexity and the contradictory nature of practices around reading lessons but also the positions from which I could make changes. As a critical practitioner preparing to put text analysis on the agenda in an early childhood classroom, I risked adding to this confusion by problematising the literate subject produced by current authoritarian and child centred discourses. As a researcher I took up the feminist poststructuralist position of looking for and making visible both the contradictions and possibilities in the competing discourses available in my classroom.

"Critical literacy"

Baker and Freebody's research problematised the power relations around texts written explicitly for children learning to read. Together with a number of researchers and practitioners they approached this issue *via* theorised recommendations for a "critical literacy". The limitations for me were that these recommendations were broadly framed by researchers and not investigated in early childhood classroom settings (Baker and Freebody 1989; Patterson 1991; Freebody and Luke 1990; Gilbert 1989). As practitioner, student and researcher, my focus remained on **the gap** between, on the one hand, knowing that change was required in the relationship between teachers, students and their texts and, on the other, having access to techniques that would help accomplish this change. **In the concluding chapter of this study, I discuss the way this emphasis on instrumental solutions to introducing a critical literacy took my attention from the discursive production of my students as readers and class members.**

Baker and Freebody (1989) asserted the need for a critical literacy, one that positioned young students not only as hearers and readers of stories, but also as analysts of texts (1989: 197). Their suggestions included making literacy a topic of learning; studying the connections between reading and writing; and producing early literacy books which experimented with presenting information in different ways. These were broadly useful possibilities; what remained was for a classroom practitioner to take up these and similar recommendations and to report on what happened in a real classroom with real students. This was the challenge I took up in my research project.

In the account of her research into the gendered nature of student texts, Gilbert (1989) contended that texts could be used to show students how to read critically, that they might, in fact, be used to make social inequities tangible.

Freebody and Luke (1990) argued that students need to learn from their earliest years to perform the following four roles required from a successful reader in our society: as a code breaker, as a meaning maker, as a user of the text and as a text analyst, able to take up the critical position of resisting manipulation by texts.

As a feminist practitioner, looking for alternatives to the way classroom discourses positioned girls, I first took up poststructuralist critiques of girls' experiences in classrooms. I then drew on the insights offered by socially critical theorists, researchers and practitioners in order to make available a critical discourse which would change the ways my students and I were positioned in our interactions around texts. As a consequence, I planned to take action by:

- challenging teacher / student / text authority relations by ensuring that my students' readings would be heard and considered as well as my own
- introducing critically-framed conversations, questions and tasks around the texts we shared to give students a chance to think about the constructions of the social world authorised by their texts and to consider different possibilities for constructing reality.

My determination, described in an earlier section, to offer subject positions to girls in which they were able to resist the limited range of positionings available to them in and by classroom practices, was still on my agenda. However as a researcher and student my interest extended to a project of repositioning all my students as critical readers: **that is, to make available a critical discourse around the texts I read aloud with my students.**

My decision to focus on teacher and student practices around reading aloud was taken for the following pragmatic and theoretical reasons:

- Texts are important places where gendered identities are produced and reproduced.

- School books and "classroom talk around texts" are "a key means for constructing what counts as literacy and the literate person" (Luke 1991: 88).
- That familiar junior primary methodology, reading aloud, was a key practice in my classroom. Because of the spread of ages from 5 years to 8 years many of my students were not able to decode texts. I used the technique of reading aloud to the whole class in order to make available to all my students roles as text participants, text users and text analysts (Luke and Freebody 1990).

When designing my research project, I narrowed my focus to the discourses which I made available around two of the sorts of texts I shared most often with my students:

- *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* (Cresswell and Brown 1990) a short novel written specifically for young readers *(Appendix A)*
- *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) a picture book I chose to read in order to disrupt the construction of the female characters *(Appendix G)*.
- I discuss in more detail in the methodology chapter my reasons for choosing to investigate practices around these texts.

This project was unique in junior primary classrooms. I reconceptualised my own literacy instruction practices in the light of the theorised but untried recommendations of theorists and researchers in upper primary classrooms and junior primary classrooms, and of researchers and practitioners in secondary English classrooms. I reworked these in order to make available to my 5 to 8 year old students a critical discourse around the texts we shared. Using discourse analysis I planned to investigate what happened when such a radically different position was offered in an early childhood classroom.

POSTSTRUCTURALIST TECHNIQUES: THE WAY FORWARD

I returned to teaching in a junior primary classroom. Through the program of reading outlined in the first sections of this review, I had built a determination to alter my pedagogical practices in order to make available a critical discourse to my students in addition to my usual process-oriented, child-centred and authoritarian discourses.

Throughout that year and into the next, I continued to extend my understandings of the possibilities opening up to me and to my students. I reworked many of the recommendations in the literature which took a feminist poststructuralist position, advocating a search for multiple positions, multiple readings and multiple meanings in texts. I reflected critically on the impact on my teaching practices and on my students' talk and writing of the critical discourse I had introduced.

I now take up an intersection of critical approaches to literacy pedagogy and poststructuralist deconstructive techniques; here I found key techniques which I drew on in order to introduce a critical discourse into my classroom.

The studies I review in this section advocated repositioning students as analysts of their texts and showed how I could take action by taking up the poststructuralist position of rendering unnatural what had seemed the natural in my classroom practices and in the texts I shared with my students, and of seeking alternate meanings to those produced (Baker and Freebody 1989; Baker 1991; Gilbert 1987; Patterson 1991; Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill 1991).

I found Gilbert (1987) particularly helpful in showing how an intersection of critical literacy and poststructuralism could bring together theoretical positions and classroom practice. Her position that "deconstructive critiques" seek to read texts in ways other than those that seem natural, universal and commonsense (page 248) made a key link with feminist poststructuralist critiques of teachers' construction of individuals, outlined in an earlier section of this review. Her recommendation that teachers focus on texts so that "we can confront the reading that the text apparently asks of us, and how and why it does this" (page 248) linked into my determination to challenge with my students the view of the social world constructed in their texts.

She argued, with Baker and Freebody (1989), that teachers needed to characterise students as 'producers' not 'consumers'; that fostering in them a "critical stance towards language and its discursive formations" would encourage active participants in reading rather than passive recipients. She took a vigorous position on the value of deconstructive critiques as tools for:

- understanding and remaking writing and texts
- helping make sense of the "patterns of discourse that surround us all"
- showing the ideological construction of texts and offering possibilities for remaking them (page 250).

Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill (1991) took the deconstructive critique into secondary classrooms But the limitation remained that no literature was available that reported how researchers or practitioners had used these tools with younger students. Like Baker (1991) these researcher / practitioners advocated using classroom texts as topics in themselves. As Baker (1991) pointed out, her research showed that teachers asked students questions about the story world and about the world outside, but they rarely asked questions about the text itself or about classroom life.

Patterson (1991) described new possibilities for action in the classroom as a result of reconceptualising reading and writing. Taking a poststructuralist perspective she shifted the conceptualisation of reading in the classroom away from viewing it as a 'natural' extension of language development to viewing it as a social practice. Her work was informed by an explanation for differences in meaning that is located in the "relationships among language, subjectivity and texts" (page 248).

The possibilities offered by Patterson included posing questions to enable students and teachers to consider the different readings available to different communities at different times, and the ways in which these readings were produced. In addition, she argued that students' attention should be directed to the way characters were

constructed, and the ways in which particular sets of meanings were produced through narrative conventions and techniques (page 249).

Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill (in press: no pagination) recommended that teachers should disrupt students' expectations before students began to read and while they were reading, with the aim of bringing to the foreground and then inspecting aspects of the text that were generally taken for granted. Their guidelines for exploring their contention that "(t)exts are always already read and already written" offered a way forward for my practice in an early childhood classroom.

My research project was designed to show what happened when junior primary students learned to look for the many reading positions made available by texts and to consider the different ways in which they were able to position themselves as readers.

RESEARCH / METHODOLOGY / PEDAGOGY NEXUS

In this section I signal some of the issues around the meeting and cross over of feminist poststructuralist pedagogy with feminist poststructuralist methodology. I pursue these at more length in Chapter Two.

When I first introduced a critical discourse into reading aloud sessions around texts written for children, I had no coherent vision, plan or strategy. I had a set of partially theorised principles to work from (drawing on an intersection of feminist poststructuralist and critical pedagogical positions), techniques to draw on, a sense that I had to move slowly and cautiously because what I was doing was new and risky for me and for my students. In contrast to the requirements of emancipatory pedagogy proposed by Lather (1986a, 1986b, 1991a, 1991b) I did not consider establishing reciprocity even to the extent of consulting my students or, until later, their parents. I took on the role of the one who decides what is good for others,

though as I introduced new ways of talking about texts, I did explain to them the sorts of issues I was thinking through. But tackling these sorts of things with 5 year olds is a challenge. I incorporated ethical considerations into the fabric of my practice by ensuring that children were heard, respecting their positions, remaining sensitive to the importance to them of their gendered individuality, while at the same time trying to make available other possibilities to them as children, as gendered beings. However, the closeness of this position to the respect for the individual advocated by a humanist individualist discourse produced contestation with my critical project on the part of some students. I explicate this view in Chapters Three and Four.

As a result of this lack of reciprocity, I faced what seemed to me to be a major difficulty in designing the sort of critical research project called for by Lather where "the goal of emancipatory research is to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched" (1986b: 266). I believed that the decision I had made on behalf of my students — to engage in critical practices around classroom texts — had failed to engage them in the "give-and-take", the "mutual negotiation of meaning and power" called for by Lather (1986b: 263). This remained a source of uneasy doubt until I reconsidered "the researched" in my work and came to the conclusion that although my students were integral to my research project as well as to my pedagogical practices, they were not my subjects, but were rather informants; my **practices** — as teacher, inservice educator, researcher, student - in all their complexity, were the object of my investigation.

When I started this work, then, I had little sense of how my project fitted into a wider pedagogical and research picture. In this review of the theoretical, the research, the pedagogical and the methodological influences from which I derived inspiration for this study, I have been able to look back on my pedagogical and

research positions and to begin to sort out how my critical enterprise was located in a region where feminist poststructuralist critiques of instructional practices around classroom texts crossed over some key concerns of postpositivist, emancipatory research.

I was engaged in an overtly ideological enterprise towards:

- the critique and transformation of unjust practices
- critical self reflective research
- participant research (Lather 1986a, 1986b, 1991a, 1991b).

I was aware of the issues around power and control as I worked to change my students' positioning with regard to books we read together in the classroom. I knew, for example, that the authority relations between me and my students were inescapable; I thus acknowledged that I was engaged in overtly ideological research and needed to guard against "imposing meanings on situations" (Lather 1991a: 13).

I proposed "to explore with my students the maldistribution of power and resources underlying our society but to change that maldistribution to help create a more equal world" (Lather, 1986b: 258). I took up the poststructuralist position of problematising texts so that my students did not take their texts and their versions of the social world for granted, but asked instead what dominant ideologies were reinforced in and by the texts and by the practices around the texts. I tackled this new position towards texts in a number of different ways. I showed my students how to disrupt their texts by arguing with them, by questioning the gendered nature of stories, by comparing texts on a particular topic. Through these techniques, I encouraged them to consider in whose interests things are the way they are in texts; what differential possibilities are available to girls and boys; and to seek other possibilities.

By interrupting the dominant readings, for example of some female characters as objects of ridicule, and seeking resistant readings I took up a pedagogical position which was "explicitly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society — that is, research as praxis" (Lather 1989b: 258).

My position as a participant researcher designing a critical research project was made problematic by my position as a critically-reflective student, reading, rereading and reconsidering; puzzling, for example, how to take up Lather's challenge to focus on "how power works via exhibition, observation, classification" (1991b: 15). My methodological concerns thus began to turn away from meeting requirements such as Lather's earlier calls for "workable ways of establishing the trustworthiness of data in new paradigm enquiry" (Lather, 1986b: 260) to finding ways of responding to her demand that we "develop a kind of self-reflexivity that will enable us to look closely at our own practice in terms of how we contribute to dominance in spite of our liberatory intentions." (1991b,: 15) In Chapter Two I tell of my response to rereading Lather (1991a, 1991b) and Weedon (1987): how I changed my research focus, taking up a feminist poststructuralist position from which I read the discourses available in my classroom during the reading aloud sessions for the contradictions and possibilities they offered me and my students.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this chapter I have reviewed the critically-based literature linking theory, research and pedagogical change which inspired me to introduce a critical discourse into my junior primary classroom. At the same time I have discussed how the poststructuralist prediction of multiplicity, confusion, contradiction and possibility impacted on my research and pedagogical positions The project I designed as an

outcome of this program of reading and reflection was intended to contribute in the following ways to existing research and practice:

- My investigation took place in a junior primary classroom where a critical literacy was on the agenda. Literature available to me had critically analysed practices in junior primary classrooms where no critical discourse was present.
- My investigation involved the use of a critical research stance which intended to contextualise the material reality of this critical enterprise.
- The studies I have reviewed above have focused narrowly on instructional practices, including the talk, texts and writing; in contrast, I took as my focus the context in which the critical enterprise was undertaken, in order to:

— reveal the scope and the context of the critical project so that practitioners can identify (with) the competing discourses and the possibilities for change in this classroom

— ensure that recommendations made about action will take into account the complexity and messiness of classroom life

— provide theorists and researchers with a glimpse of what happens when their insights are reworked for implementation in a real classroom; when their theorising is played out in practice.

Chapter Two

CONNECTING CRITICAL AND FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

INTRODUCTION

Among the books I read aloud with my 5 to 8 year old students in 1992 were a short novel, *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* (Cresswell and Browne 1990) (*Appendix A*) and *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) (*Appendix G*). In Chapter Three of this study I make multiple readings of my teaching practices around these sessions in order to scrutinise the contradictory discourses available in a classroom where a critical pedagogy underpins reading instruction. In this present chapter:

- I look back at my struggle to understand the intersections and contradictions between the feminist poststructuralist and the critical research position I adopted in this study
- I explain how my reflections on the methodological implications of the range of positions I occupied (as critical practitioner, researcher and student) brought about the decision to present my findings as a set of readings of contradictions and possibilities.

I first describe the critical research project designed with the aim of analysing the impact of a critical discourse on my teaching and on my students' talking and writing. My account then becomes one of difficulty and of contestation where I take up the issue of the complexity and dynamism of my positionings. I then explain how I took into account the challenges, contradictions and possibilities inherent in feminist poststructuralist research.

As I explained in Chapter One, when I designed this study critical research was the only orientation available to me through which I could investigate change. As I show in this chapter, following rereading and reflection on the literature critiquing this research tradition and following analysis of my material, I took the position that a feminist poststructuralist frame would reveal, examine and acknowledge contradictions, and offer possibilities about classroom interactions not available to critical research. Throughout the period covered by this account I grappled with the tensions produced by my desire to "complete" my project, and by my need to deal with the following question about research methodology:

How can I theorise, incorporate and take into account the uncertainty, the interruption, the rethinking, the redesign, the change in my research orientation, the ethical dilemmas that arise through thinking and reading about my multiple positioning as researcher, critical practitioner and student during the course of designing the study, analysing my material and giving accounts of my findings?

This chapter shows how I responded to this question.

THE SITE: MY STUDENTS AND THEIR SCHOOL

My class was one of six junior primary classes in a near-city metropolitan primary school. I was the class teacher, responsible for all literacy instruction. My students were aged from 5 to 8 years. The school had a policy of "continuous intake" so that 5 year olds typically started school close to their fifth birthday. The wide spread of ages was not uncommon in schools where "vertical integration" was a deliberately chosen approach to the early years of schooling. The belief underpinning this practice was that children's social and emotional development was fostered by a classroom environment which included a range of ages. The spread of ages had

implications for the design of tasks, for the nature of the talk and for interaction with and among students in all classroom situations.

The school received support from the Commonwealth government through the Disadvantaged Schools Program because of the relatively high number of students living in poverty and the number of students from non English speaking background.

Most children in my class were of Anglo–Australian background; two students had come with their families as refugees from Cambodia; one had been born in Croatia. The numbers of boys and girls were approximately equal during the year in which as classroom teacher I made available to my students a critical discourse focusing particularly on the social world represented in the texts they shared with me.

DATA IDENTIFICATION

At the beginning, I had to clarify the relationship between the classroom artefacts I had collected during 1992 and my research project; I had to think through how what I was proposing to investigate was represented in the materials I had collected. I decided that identifying particular reading instructional episodes around which I undertook critical analysis with my students was the key to selecting materials for analysis. On this basis I concluded that the data for my study were to be **the records of the thinking, talking and students' products around episodes in which was embedded the critical pedagogy I introduced by way of a critical discourse.**

The materials for analysis were an issue for me as a teacher and a researcher in that they were selected from among a comprehensive collection of classroom artefacts I had made during 1992. For this reason I have adopted the term **data identification** rather than data collection. These materials formed a record of ongoing classroom explorations with my students of the construction of gendered identities in and by

classroom practices, the construction of teacher / student relationships during reading instruction, and the construction of the social world in and by children's texts.

Since beginning these explorations, I had made a practice of keeping:

- records of how I reworked theories and recommendations in the literature in order to arrive at the decisions behind my lesson plans
- records of the writing and drawing done by my students as a result of the critical pedagogy I implemented around their texts
- reflections on lesson where I had attempted planned critical text analysis
- video and audio taped records of teacher and student talk around selected texts.

My decision to collect these materials was an outcome of my multiple positioning as critical practitioner / researcher / student:

- I wanted to be able to report on my investigations — into the activities and the talk around the texts which were taking junior primary students into new territory and I believed opening up new possibilities for the constructions of readers in all classrooms — to audiences of teachers through journal articles, a book and conference presentations.
- I was involved in national and state projects[1] for which video or audio taped records of talk around texts and examples of children's written products were required.

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[1] These projects included (a) trialing materials produced by the Curriculum Corporation for use in schools with the document *English – The National profile* (Curriculum Corporation 1993) and providing examples of students and teacher materials to illustrate the implementation of the profile

- I planned to use these records as the basis for critical reflection followed by action with regard to:
  - — the spaces I opened for all students to make readings of texts
  - — the positions I made available to the girls as readers and participants in classroom dialogue
  - — students taking up opportunities to become analysts of their texts.

From this accumulation of artefacts I selected the materials around two texts: *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* (Cresswell and Browne 1990) and *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) to form the basis of my analysis. (The corpus of these materials, including reproductions of the two books, are found in the *Appendices A to I.*)

My reasons for choosing to analyse the practices . including the critical pedagogy underpinning the planning, talk and activities . around these texts were as follows:

- I had collected comprehensive records of the episodes around each of the texts, including my planning notes, transcripts of classroom talk taken from audio taping, and student written products *(Appendices B – F; H and I)*.
- The texts are representative of the "literary" children's picture books (*Beware of the aunts)* and short novels (*Almost goodbye, Guzzler)* I most often chose for critical analysis in whole–class discussion.
- I had raised clearly identified issues for students' scrutiny for each of the texts. I therefore judged that they would yield illuminating information about the critical enterprise in my classroom.

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in schools (b) University of South Australia project producing video materials for use with pre–service teaching students

- The lessons involving each or them formed part of some other project . National Profile trialing and video taping for pre-service teaching courses . providing a typically complex classroom context.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section I outline my search for questions which would prove useful to me as a reflective practitioner and as a researcher. This account of two sets of research questions demonstrates how I attempted to come to grips with the impact on my position as a critical researcher of insights from Lather (1991a, 1991b) and Fairclough (1989) who pointed the way to incorporating notions about my complex positionings into my study.

ANALYSING CRITICAL TALK AROUND TEXTS

The first set of questions I asked focussed on my teacher role in setting up my students as analysts of texts and on my students' responses to the changes in pedagogy explained in Chapter One:

How do I set my students up to be analysts of text?

- What talk occurs around the text?
- What tasks do I set children?

What can students in my class do as text analysts?

- What do they say during classroom analytical activities?
- What do they write as a result of my framing analytical tasks?
- What are the limitations of text analysis with the youngest children in the class?

Do all students take up the role of analyst to the same extent?

- What do those students who resist the role of analyst say, do and write?

- What do those students who take up the role of analyst say and write?

Analysis

I looked for an analytical method that would reveal a link between, on the one hand, my teacher talk and the activities I set for my students in the context of critical text analysis, and, on the other hand, my students' responses during these sessions. While my routine reflections on my teaching seemed to me to indicate that my students were starting to take up some of the opportunities offered them to join in with analytical talk and writing around their texts, I wanted to know more precisely which aspects of critical analysis they were responding to. I hoped thus to make recommendations which would demonstrate to other teachers the possibilities and limitations of the sorts of talk and activities I had used to introduce my young students to a critical view of their world as constructed in their texts.

To these ends, I planned:

- to list what my notes showed about my plans for critical analysis of these texts
- to list which of those plans I carried out, recording what I said and the tasks I set for my students
- to list what my students said and did in response to the talk and tasks I initiated: what critical understandings and knowledge they showed, what they said that showed either resistance to or critical analysis of texts
- to code these lists
- to mark the records of responses for age.

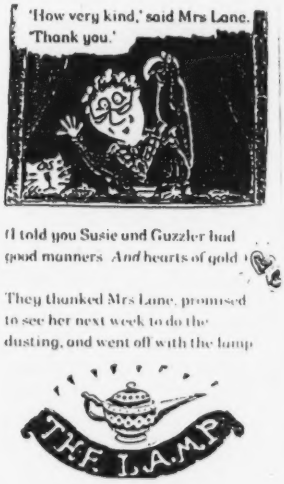
It seemed to me that the extent of students' engagement with critical analyses would be demonstrated by students:

- joining in discussion around critical readings

- making readings of text different to mine
- demonstrating their understanding that texts are crafted objects
- changing texts
- taking their lives inside and outside school as topics for writing, talking and critical inspection.

Findings

In this section I survey briefly the findings that contributed to the decision to reconsider my research methodology. Preliminary analysis of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* (Cresswell and Brown, 1990) began with my attempt **to identify the sections of the transcripts of class talk around the text where I had engaged students in critical text analysis** (*Appendix F*). As I show, problematical aspects of my focus on analysing critical discourse soon became evident.


'How very kind,' said Mrs Lane.
'Thank you.'
I told you Susie and Guzzler had good manners. And hearts of gold.
They thanked Mrs Lane, promised to see her next week to do the dusting, and went off with the lamp.
THE LAMP
fig i

Limitations and contradictions

In my first analytical passes through the set of turns reproduced below, I categorised half of the turns as "critical discourse", raising this question about the approach I had adopted to a critical research methodology: Could a focus on critical talk, to the exclusion of the other discourses available, allow me to accomplish my aim of making pedagogical recommendations to teachers (Chapter One: 25, this study)? In order to achieve this aim, I needed to take into account in my investigation **the interactions that seemed to get in the way of critical discourse**.

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I needed, in fact, to reconsider my methodological approach and thus my research focus.

> **O'Brien**: (persisting) And can you also see how whoever did the illustrations has put those two little hearts there. *(fig i)* Right, here's the question. I want you to think about /
> **/Jack**: Why?
> **O'Brien**: Why hearts? Because of having hearts of gold. They had hearts of gold. And so there are the hearts of gold.
> **Jack**: THE LAMP (some background hubbub, unidentifiable)
> **O'Brien**: OK What is going to happen. Let's have thinking, hands up /
> **/Student**: (largely inaudible about biscuits)
> **O'Brien**: OK I'm sorry can you sit back a bit please your voice is going to come through much too loud I think. /
> **Students**: (indistinguishable comments)
> **O'Brien**: Speak nice and loudly and clearly when you tell me what you think. What's going to happen? A lamp.....A lamp, an old lamp. Think about the things /
> **/Student**: A genie
> **Jack**: (inaudible) Ms O'Brien
> **/O'Brien**: Excuse me. Think about the things you already know about stories with lamps in them and see
> **Student**: That's the thing that probably made the magic /
> **Steven**: (laughing inaudible comment)
> **/Student**: A genius /
> **O'Brien**: OK People who have their hands up will the ones who get asked first of course. Anthea.
> **Anthea**: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* It's going to become magic and a genie's going to come out and grant them wishes *(Appendix F)*

Subsequent analysis of this part of the transcript drew my attention to contradictions which contributed to my decision to reconsider my research questions so that they could focus on more than text analysis:

- Talk I categorised as critical was closely intertwined with my insistence on compliance with particular turn taking traditions and teacherly formulations.
- My stance towards my students combined the contradictory positions of encouraging critical consideration of the text and discouraging contributions not offered on my terms.
- My reception of student talk was influenced by other than the critical content of their answers.

My project of untangling from the available discourses the "aspects of critical analysis (my students) were responding to" (Chapter Two: 32, this study), was beginning to appear incompatible with the findings of complexity and contradiction revealed by preliminary analysis.

Multiplicities and contradictions

In subsequent moves designed to analyse discussion around the text *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*, I reread the **transcript of classroom talk** (*Appendix F*) **in the light of my planning notes** (*Appendix B*), using as my guiding questions:

- **What did I plan to talk about?**
- **What was my talk about?**

My notes revealed a teacher planning to explore issues, to challenge the taken for granted, to open spaces, to intervene in students' commonsense understandings of the text, to ask hard questions and provide tools for answering them, to confront students' views and her own, to reveal her own position. In short, the talk and activities were designed to engage my students in critical discourse.

The first twelve talk turns of the transcript *(Appendix A1)* showed that my talk covered a great deal more than my critical agenda. I used talk:

- to manage student behaviour
- to make statements of my purposes
- to validate valued behaviour, to name approved behaviour
- to organise turn taking
- to evaluate student contributions
- to provide explicit orientation to the task
- to take up critical positions with regard to the task

- to share my own understandings
- to disrupt taken-for-granted positions on the text
- to acknowledge student contributions to talk
- to answer student questions
- to take up student contributions as an agenda item
- to seek engagement in the text
- to seek agreement with my views
- to negotiate procedure ...

Analytical moves had begun to reveal a picture of complexity, of a teacher taking a range of positions, calling on differing discourses, accomplishing many different tasks; a picture of contradictions between my critical enterprise and the authoritarian discourses I took up. **In short, precisely the sort of complexity and contradiction predicted by a feminist poststructuralist position**.

Gaps and contradictions

My research questions were predicated on the usefulness of investigating what was said (or rather what was recorded, transcribed and identified as the response of a particular student). A further move in my analysis, taking up the question **Who was heard to speak?,** drew my attention to who was not heard: nearly half my students were not heard during the half hour of reading aloud and talk I had recorded; almost half of all turns were taken by unidentifiable voices. The research questions I posed neither acknowledged nor took into account this aspect of the discourses around the text.

My use of a quantitative analysis to highlight issues requiring further investigation, then viewing them through a feminist poststructuralist lens, added an important dimension to the multiple readings I later made of the classroom artefacts.

Using a count of turns at talking, I could show my students and I sharing the conversation almost equally. Despite my intention to challenge established authority relations around texts and to ensure that my students' readings would be heard as well as my own, however, talk was overwhelmingly dominated by two boys and me. Neither of these boys engaged in any critical talk. Girls joined in the critical talk, boys, on the whole did not. Although nearly twice as many girls as boys made an individual contribution loud enough to be recorded, these boys spoke three times as often as the girls. In a classroom where the talk was dominated by me and the boys not engaged in critical talk, to focus on the critical agenda largely failed to make the link between pedagogy and research, and thereby to investigate "how research and teaching methods can better challenge the relations of dominance" (Lather 1991b: xv).

A feminist poststructuralist research direction

Findings such as those described above drew my attention to the talk not acknowledged by my research questions and to my multiple positionings and the attendant power relationships in my classroom. They suggested that if I wanted to take into account the concerns about teacher authority, power relationships and the construction of readers which had driven my pedagogy, and at the same time build a useful picture of what happened in a junior primary classroom, I needed to ask research questions which would make it possible for me to investigate more than the critical agenda; questions which would reveal the complexity and contradictions of my classroom. I needed to see my classroom as a site of "disarray and conflict inscribed by multiple contestatory discourses" (Lather 1991b: 5).

As I explain in the next section, the emerging picture produced by preliminary analysis together with ongoing reflection on my positionings as teacher / student-researcher, pointed me towards a feminist poststructuralist analysis that acknowledged the difficulties and offered tools with to search for them and also made available a way to write up the complexity, contradictions and possibilities.

INVESTIGATING POWER RELATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

I explained in Chapter One that this study took place in the context of ongoing analysis of my material, as well as ongoing reading and reflection about my teaching practices and their connections with feminist poststructuralist research (Lather 1991a, 1991b). As a consequence, **the focus of my study shifted from an analysis of teacher and students engaged in critical text exploration during two reading lessons to an examination of the discursive practices present during two reading lessons. I took up the feminist poststructuralist concept of analysing the discursive practices in my classroom with a view to identifying power relations, struggle, resistances and possibilities for change** (Weedon 1987).

This new direction was informed by continued reflection on the connection between language and power. Fairclough's claim that "language contributes to the domination of some people by others" (1989: 1) and Lather's focus on "the power of language to organise our thought and experience" (1991a: 13) reminded me that an attempt to problematise the authority relations between me and my students had been one of my aims in introducing a critical discourse into reading lessons. I drew also on Weedon's assertion that

> through a concept of discourse, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, ... feminist poststructuralism is able ... to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it. (Weedon 1987: 41)

As an outcome of thus acknowledging my multiple positioning as critically-reflective teacher / researcher / student, I framed a second set of questions and a new analytical approach. I now outline:

- the connections I made between **Lather's critique of emancipatory pedagogy and research**, and my determination to investigate power relations around two texts read aloud in my classroom
- my use of **Critical Language Study** to reveal the unequal relations of power enacted in and by the language used in my classroom.
- my use of a **feminist poststructuralist research orientation** to produce readings of my material revealing the contradictions and possibilities implicated in the discourses available around reading aloud in my classroom.

Critique of emancipatory pedagogy and research

I explained in Chapter One that my classroom project aimed at interrupting "relations of dominance and subordination" (Lather 1991b: xvii) by tentative changes to the way power was constituted, particularly in interactions around texts. Preliminary research findings described in this chapter demonstrated, however, that my critical research approach failed to:

- take account of the centrality of my position as the researcher (Lather 1991b: xv)
- throw suspicion on my "expert prescriptions" for making classroom changes (Lather 1991b: xx)
- explore the possibilities and limits of my attempts to use a critical discourse to challenge unequal power relations (Lather 1991b: 2)

- look closely at my own practice and consequently to "write postmodern", paradoxically aware of one's complicity in that which one critiques" (Lather 1991b: 10).

Lather showed that a poststructuralist orientation could make overt "how power permeates the construction and legitimation of knowledges." The addition of poststructuralism foregrounded for my critical research position:

> the inescapability of how our invested positionality shapes our rhetoric and practice and that this ... includes the discourse of those of us who embrace the term "oppositional" to describe the work we do in the name of liberatory politics. (Lather 1991b: xvii)

Taking up Lather's recommended use of a poststructuralist lens as a methodological tool (1991a, 1991b), I reconsidered the potential in my position as teacher – researcher to speak for my students, and determined to develop the "kind of self–reflexivity that will enable us to look closely at our own practice in terms of how we contribute to dominance in spite of our liberatory intentions" (Lather 1991b: 15).

I reconsidered the questions I had posed (Chapter Two: 32, this study), reading them as a text, throwing suspicion on the implicit assumptions in them that a neat, focussed analysis of the critical enterprise in my classroom was possible (Lather 1991a: 5). **My concern was not whether they were able to do the investigative work I wanted but whether they took into account the equivocal position I took as researcher / teacher, the multiple positions taken by teacher and students; and the issue of the interested nature of text analysis in my classroom.** I was inside what I was doing; I was driving what I was doing; I was responding to others' writing, research; responding to others' response to what I was doing, I was inspecting what I was doing: I was within / without / against / with what I was doing (Lather 1991a, 1991b).

My position as a critically– reflective practitioner encompassed far more than the inward gaze that takes so much space in the sort of writing I am presently engaged in. At the time when I collected the classroom artefacts which I later identified as my research materials, I was involved in two significant national and local projects[2]. Two examples will illustrate this point. Included in the materials around the short novel *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* (Cresswell and Browne 1990) was teacher talk about gathering examples of Speaking and Listening in junior primary classrooms for the National English Profile. I had access to the transcript of one of the lessons around the picture book *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) precisely because it was video taped as part of a tertiary institution project developing instructional materials for use with trainee teachers. Indeed my plans for that lesson were informed by the project developers' request that I make available a range of teacher / student interactions.

At an intersection of poststructuralism and critical research, (Lather 1991b, page 2) then, I reworked my research orientation so that my questions took account of the unequal relations of power enacted in and by the language used in my classroom:

- **What contradictions and possibilities are found in the discourses available in reading lessons in one junior primary classroom?**
- **What positionings do the language practices in reading aloud sessions make available to my students and to me?**
- **What possibilities do I make available to my students:**
  - **to read with me**
  - **to read against my readings**

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[2] See footnote 1, page 30, this chapter.

- **to make alternate readings?**

Language and power

In order to reveal the discursive positionings during the reading aloud sessions around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* and *Beware of the aunts* I took up **Critical Language Study** (Fairclough 1989) which was concerned with the place of language in society; adopting the position "that language is centrally involved in power, and struggles for power, and that it is so involved through its ideological properties" (Fairclough 1989: 17). As such, it had the potential to open for my inspection the power relations in my classroom and the possibilities I made available to my students for resistance and change:

> CLS (Critical Language Study) analyses social interactions in a way which focuses upon their linguistic elements, and which sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system. (Fairclough 1989: 5)

Using this analytical tool, I focussed on the linguistic elements in social interactions, thus revealing the implicit authority relationships which commonsense takes for granted. (Fairclough 1989: 2, 4) As a system of discourse analysis, it offered techniques for analysing particular instances of discourse with the aim of showing the connections between language use and unequal relations of power; (Fairclough 1989: 1) in particular, the contradictions, complexities and possibilities found in the discourses available in reading lessons in one junior primary classroom.

CLS conceptualised language as "*discourse*, language as social practice determined by social structures" (Fairclough 1989: 17) with "(t)ext analysis ... correspondingly only a part of discourse analysis, which also includes analysis of productive and interpretative processes" (1989: 24). CLS thus provided the means for analysing

"the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures" (1989: 24).

The three stages of critical discourse analysis were a particularly appropriate analysis to take up in the light of my acknowledgment of the interested nature of text analysis in my classroom and of the ideological nature of my classroom enterprise (Chapter One: 23, this study).

- **Description** is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.
- **Interpretation** is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction . with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation ...
- **Explanation** is concerned with the relationship between interpretation and social context . with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects. (Fairclough 1989: 26)

I used this theoretical position to uncover and render problematic some of the complexities of the power relationships produced by my challenge to conventional teacher / student authority during reading aloud sessions.

Feminist poststructuralist readings

The aim of my pedagogy was to translate into action feminist poststructuralist critiques of classroom practices around texts. Taking the same perspective on my research materials, I made readings around the contradictions and possibilities constructed when a teacher introduces a critical discourse with a feminist poststructuralist edge into a junior primary classroom where the usual complex agendas are being played out.

I thus analysed the discursive practices in my classroom with a view to investigating:

- my multiple positionings as teacher / researcher / student
- power relations, struggle, resistances and possibilities for change.

I searched the materials for evidence of my students:

- taking up discourses other than the critical discourses I made available
- introducing agendas competing with my critical agenda
- attempting to set up positionings for themselves in opposition to the roles I set up.

I used the following poststructuralist techniques to read the materials in the following ways:

- intertextually, putting one text against another
- looking for power relations
- looking for gaps: who is here, who is not; what is not said / talked about.

This examination offered me the potential to **demonstrate the complexity of the classroom by reading for struggle, contradictions and possibilities around textual activities and orientations towards texts drawing on techniques and positionings suggested by Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill (1992), Baker and Freebody (1989) and Gilbert (1987) as explicated in Chapter One.**

In Chapter Three I make three readings:

- **Readings 1 and 2** explore the **struggle, contradictions and possibilities for change around my project of problematising *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*.**
- **Reading 3** explores **the struggle, contradictions and possibilities for change around the construction of gendered subjects in *Beware of the aunts*.**

Chapter Three

READING THE MATERIALS

Struggle, contradictions and possibilities for change

I explained in detail in Chapters One and Two that, as a teacher taking a feminist poststructuralist position towards classroom texts and the relationships between me and my students during reading lessons, I designed this study to investigate how I set up a critical analysis of texts and how my students responded. I planned to explore the questions: **How do I set my students up to be analysts of text? What can students in my class do as text analysts?**

Three insights however changed my position that the materials from my classroom would yield clear-cut findings. Firstly, as a teacher engaged on a project which involved disruption of texts, seeking multiple readings, showing children that texts do not have one fixed meaning, I needed to take a compatible stance towards my materials: that is, to scrutinise them for many meanings.

Secondly, I needed to recognise the multiple positionings from which I viewed the material: as a researcher with a set of precise questions with indefinite meanings; as a teacher critically inspecting her practice; as a feminist seeking to investigate the usefulness of poststructuralist deconstructive techniques for scrutinising gendered constructions of students in and by discursive practices in reading aloud sessions.

Thirdly, the evidence from a preliminary analysis of the materials showed a great deal going on during reading lessons; far more than is generally revealed in the literature which problematises reading instruction in lower primary classrooms.

I decided that I could not ignore the parallel meanings, the alternate readings which tell of collusion, resistance, competing agendas, of the complexity of what was happening while I showed students how to read critically.

In this chapter, therefore, I make multiple readings of the materials I have collected around my two texts, *Almost goodbye, Guzzler (full text is reproduced in Appendix A)* and *Beware of the aunts (full text is reproduced in Appendix G)*, with the aim of demonstrating the complexities, contradictions and possibilities in both my positionings and those of my young students. These readings are:

Reading 1: ***They always show teachers as stupid*** *(Transcript, Appendix F, turn 9)*

In Reading 1 I read these materials:

- my planning notes (*Appendix B*)
- the classroom chart (*Appendix C)*
- students' drawings and writing (*Appendix D*)
- my reflections (*Appendix E*)
- the transcript (*Appendix F).*

My **focus** is my students' positionings as I set about my poststructuralist projects of:

- **Making possible multiple readings of classroom texts**
- **Disrupting the taken-for-granted in classroom texts.**

Reading 2: ***....the title page.... the title page, Ms O'Brien*** *(Transcript, Appendix F, turn 101)*

In Reading 2 I read the transcript of the talk around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler (the text is reproduced in Appendix E*) **focusing** on my feminist poststructuralist project of **challenging the usual authority relations between teacher and students in a**

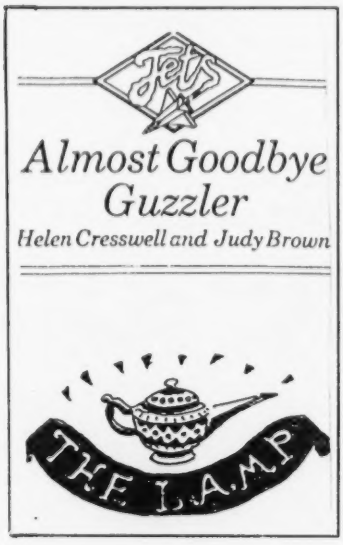
reading lesson where the critical project is to make available speaking positions for my students, particularly the girls.

Reading 3: ***It's not fair. My aunts aren't like that*** *(Transcript, Appendix I, turn 204)*

I base Reading 3 on the transcript of talk around *Beware of the aunts (the text is reproduced in Appendix H).* The **focus** is my feminist poststructuralist project of **problematising the construction of gender in and by classroom practices.**

READINGS AROUND *ALMOST GOODBYE, GUZZLER*

Analysis of the materials around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* showed that I spent only some of the lesson time engaged in my critical enterprise, and a lot of time positioning myself and being positioned by my students in a range of different ways (Lather 1991a, 1991b; Fairclough 1989). As a researcher I was also a participant; as a participant I was also an authority figure, a teacher, a researcher, a trialler of materials, a feminist woman (Lather 1991a, 1991b).



And while I was monitoring what was going on, I was making decisions about taking the discussion in new directions or terminating it. In the event, technology made the decision for me, at least as far as this material is concerned: the audio tape got tangled inside the recorder.

The poststructuralist stories told here start with a glimpse of some of my positionings during the classroom routine of students sharing rehearsed texts. I then investigate my planning notes *(Appendix B)* and explore some of the ways in which critical purposes were played out in the classroom via a classroom chart *(Appendix C)*, reflection notes *(Appendix E)*, student writing and drawing *(Appendix D)* and a transcript of classroom talk *(Appendix F)*.

SHARING REHEARSED TEXTS

Jack's choice: *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*

For one of our regular "reading aloud" sessions, during which students took turns to share with the class a previously rehearsed text, seven year old Jack selected, *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*. It is a short book, intended to be enjoyed as a first novel for young children to read themselves. Its appeal lies in its rather daring humour, its innovative, lively format, in the familiarity to young readers of the stereotypical representation of a ridiculous teacher and naughty children, and its fast-paced narrative built around the genie, the lamp and three wishes story.

Even when you were babies you were best friends they said
Yuck!
Excuse me while I'm sick!
Susie and Guzzler were in Class 4 at Witherspoon Road Junior School
fig i

The format combines prose and black and white cartoon-style illustrations with "speech bubbles" *(fig i)*. The result presents young readers with the complex decisions regarding which section of the page to read first, and which bits they can leave out and still maintain meaning.

Intervention, interruption and disruption,

When Jack began reading this text aloud I found myself occupying conflicting positions. In the first place, the sharing sessions gave students a "real" purpose for

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reading aloud (eg Lankshear 1989). Interwoven with this was a child-centred discourse: Jack had chosen a text that he knew would appeal to the others and he had certainly rehearsed the reading. My feminist position lead me to reread these taken-for-granted practices as yet another boy taking some of the limited available space as the centre of attention. In the event, my feminist determination to direct students' attention to familiar **gender based stereotypes** came together with my interest in **examining intertextuality** and the notion that **stories are written before a writer puts the words on the page** (Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill, 1992).

So, after listening to Jack read aloud a couple of pages to the class, I decided to intervene and read the novel aloud myself, drawing on the poststructuralist discourse of **intervention, interruption and disruption** (Chapter Two: 21, this study). Jack subsequently positioned himself with a humanist individualist discourse as the "owner" of this text and struggled with me, throughout the rest of the lessons around this text, to maintain the boundary between "his" text and "mine". I raise this unlooked-for consequence of my intervention again in Reading 2 and in the final chapter of this study. As the following readings of the interactions around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* show, this is not the only position that I took as a teacher in the course of the lessons.

READING 1: ***They always show teachers as stupid*** *(Transcript, Appendix F, turn 9)*

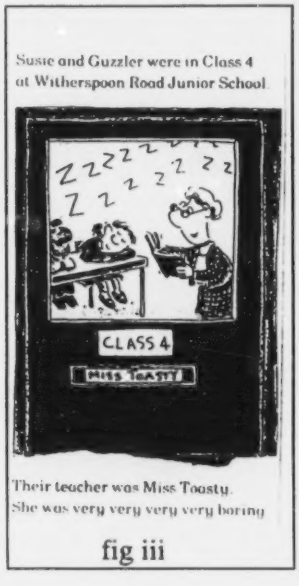
My **notes** *(Appendix B)* and **reflections** *(Appendix E)* recording plans for the shared reading of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* show how I explicitly drew on **poststructuralist understandings** about texts and **poststructuralist techniques** as a basis for classroom activities. I designed a set of questions, based on insights from Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill (in press), aimed at **making available to my students**

reading positions advocated for upper primary, secondary and tertiary students but not usually available to junior primary children. In this reading, I first investigate the positions I planned to take up as a teacher and critical reader of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler,* under the headings:

- **Planning a critical discourse**
  - — **Demonstrating multiple reading positions**
  - — **Disrupting the taken-for-granted.**

Following these explorations, I then read the classroom artefacts (*Appendices C, D, F*), exploring under the following heading how the critical discourse was taken up in the reading aloud sessions:

- **Engaging with a critical discourse.**


Susie and Guzzler were in Class 4
at Witherspoon Road Junior School.
CLASS 4
MISS TOASTY
Their teacher was Miss Toasty.
She was very very very very boring.
fig iii

Planning a critical discourse

The fact that teachers intervene between students and their texts is well established (Baker and Freebody 1989). However I hoped to break new ground by showing my students how I engaged with critical readings, and making it possible for them to do so as well. The range of positions I planned to demonstrate to my students, the technique of disruption to challenge students' taken-for-granted responses, are not usually available to students of this age (Baker and Freebody 1989). The constraints, as I struggled to frame talk and activities that would make critical engagement possible, are evident. My questions tended to follow the narrative structure of *Almost goodbye,*

So Susie and Guzzler sat at the back
of the class and did their own thing.
They played noughts and crosses,
mostly.
Or hangman
fig iv

Guzzler in preserving the familiar teacher / student opposition on which so much classroom interaction is predicated. Still, as I show later, although some students took up the proffered position in opposition to teachers, thus making the reading explicitly offered by the text *(fig iii and iv)*, others did take up the critical discourse I offered.

Demonstrating multiple reading positions

I planned to make my reading position explicit, while showing how **I could also read this text from more than one position**:

> Do you notice how as a teacher and a woman I reject readings of the teacher as a woman who deserves to have kids play up on her? *(Planning Notes, Appendix B)*
>
> I used to be a school student so I can read this as some kids getting fun out of a boring classroom. *(Planning Notes, Appendix B)*.

I wanted my students to consider the **meanings available to particular readers** (Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill 1992):

> Who laughs at this book?
> How does it make us laugh?
> Who is the story for?
> Is it for teachers Yes? ... Why? No? ... Why?
> Is it for students Yes? ... Why? No? ... Why? *(Planning Notes, Appendix B)*.

In order to **disrupt the meaning dominant in this text** and thus make a reading not usually available to young children, I planned

- to talk about how the humour achieved its effect
- to reveal the dominant reading rather than simply allowing students to take it for granted:

> It makes us laugh by ridiculing teacher. I want to challenge the dominant reading of the teacher as a person it's OK to ridicule. *(Planning Notes, Appendix B)*.

I wanted to be confronting about the way **my reading of the text challenged the dominant reading**:

> We have to agree with this writer that it's OK to be rude to make jokes about a "boring" teacher.
> We laugh at the children if we think it's OK to be rude to a teacher *(Planning Notes, Appendix B).*

Questions designed to disrupt the dominant reading by **defamiliarising** the text asked students to confront the possibility that there could be a range of competing readings:

> What would teachers like about this?
> What wouldn't teachers like about it?
> What do students like about it?
> What do students not like about it? *(Planning Notes, Appendix B).*

Disrupting the taken-for-granted

In addition to the planning notes *(Appendix B),* I made fragmentary written plans *(Appendix G)* for disrupting my students' reading of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler.* Here I identified a number of points at which I planned to interrupt the reading aloud and planned a number of questions. The transcript of the second reading aloud session around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler (Appendix F)* shows how I drew on a feminist poststructuralist position towards children's texts and their use in classrooms to make the text an item of study. I disrupted it, denaturalising it by drawing attention to intertextuality. I framed questions intended to help students read this text through their knowledge of other texts. I suggested resistance to the text's use of well worn familiar formulas (which make readers feel comfortable and as if they are in on the secret of the text) by opening up the possibility that being different, going against the expected construction, is possible and a good thing.

I now take up the artefacts produced during the reading aloud sessions *(Appendices C, D, F)*, considering in turn my students' engagement with the notion that a range

of reading positions is possible and the competing discourses that accompanied my defamiliarisation of aspects of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*, under the headings:

- **Engaging with a critical discourse**
  - **— Limitations, difficulty and contradictions around critically– framed questions**
  - **— Student readings of a critically– framed task**
  - **— Contestation and possibility: The meaning of the lesson**
  - **— Contestation and possibility: Taking up a critical discourse ... tentatively.**

Engaging with a critical discourse

In this section, I reveal how I struggled with the difficulties associated with introducing a new discourse which critiqued a text that explicitly hailed its student readers, putting them into opposition with teachers, and at the same time enacting the familiar narrative device of the genie – with – twist. The contradiction between my conventional teacher position as authority and knower and this new position as initiator of text inquiry are revealed in this exploration of children's responses to my questions *(classroom chart, Appendix C)* and to the short task I set *(student drawings and writing, Appendix D)*. I consider first, students' engagement with critically–framed questions and second, students' engagement with a critically–framed task.

Limitations, difficulty and contradictions around critically–framed questions

As I read aloud from *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* I interrupted with discussion around some of the questions I had planned, **then recorded student responses on a**

classroom chart. One set of questions lead students into identifying the appeal of the text to a particular group of readers:

> Who laughs at this book?
> *Students*
> What things in this book make these readers laugh?
> *consequences game ... ridiculous about Miss Toasty*
> *sending Miss Toasty to Mars*
> *barbecue (given by) Miss Toasty (classroom chart, Appendix C).*

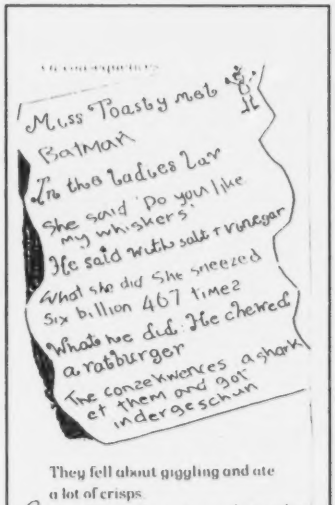
These questions failed however to shift them from taking up the discourse that placed them in opposition to teachers:

> Is it OK to laugh at her because she's boring?
> *Yes (Classroom chart, Appendix C).*

A subsequent set of questions and responses showed my students' ambivalence when asked to consider how teachers stood in relation to the text:

> Who is this story for?
> Teachers?: Why?
> *They might think it's funny enough to read their class.*
> Teachers? Why not?
> *Teachers and adults wouldn't laugh at it. It makes fun of adults. (Classroom chart, Appendix C).*

I read the use of *might*, by students recently introduced to a critical positioning towards their texts, as a signal of their uncertainty about how exactly to engage in this new discourse (Fairclough 1989: 127). At the same time, I read students' hesitancy as awareness of my contradictory position in relation to this text. Implicit in their response was a question about how should they read my partial collusion in my own ridicule. It had been important to state clearly my resistant reading of this text; to show how I could read it as funny and at the same time question what it was saying about people like me: female teachers.


Miss Toasty mob
Batman
In the ladies bar
She said 'Do you like my whiskers'
He said with salt + vinegar
What she did She sneezed
Six billion 467 times
What he did. He chewed a rabburger
The consekwences a shark et them and got indergeschun
They fell about giggling and ate a lot of crisps.
Miss Toasty droned on and on and on
fig v

This brief discussion highlights some of the struggles I was engaged in. Funny books written for children are not just fun; but at the same time they **are** fun. I had taken a contradictory set of positions towards this text, and had made it possible for some of my students to get a glimpse of the complexities involved in exploring reading positions.

Their silence when asked why students would not like the text demonstrates both the limits to my opening up the text for analysis and the limits of the critical discourse available to me and to my students:

> Who is this story for?
> Students? Why?
> *It's for kids. It's not true*
> *It's made-up things that make kids laugh.*
> Students? Why not?
> *(no one could come up with an answer) (Classroom chart, Appendix C).*

Student readings of a critically-framed task

Children aged 5 – 8 years are often asked to respond to a narrative text with a drawing of something from the story; a drawing of something that happened in the story; a drawing of the characters in the story. These tasks encourage students to think about the story but not about the text itself (Baker 1991). My aim was to set a task that would make it possible for student to explore and / or demonstrate their understanding of how different groups of readers are positioned by this text. I asked them to

> Draw either something in the story students laugh at or something teachers would not like. *(Classroom chart, Appendix C).*

I now show how an examination of students' drawings uncovered the range of positions they took in relation to the task.

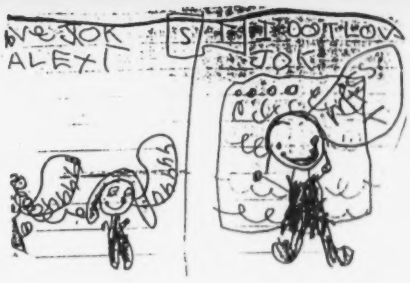
Two girls and one boy responded with a drawing and label that certainly fulfilled the requirements of the task; however neither gave any indication that they read the activity as inviting a critical response to the text.

Lauren 6
Consequences. Drawing: *Game of consequences.(see game of consequences as represented in Almost goodbye, Guzzler fig v) (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

Louisa 7
Drawing: *Piece of paper,* writing: *Consequences game; it is fun; it is a fun game. (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

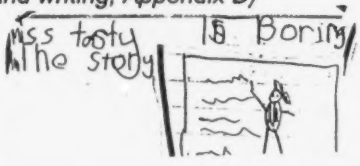
Steven 6
They are playing (consequences)
Drawing: *Two children sitting at a desk (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

On the other hand, two girls produced drawings and labels that I read as showing some engagement with the idea that different readers are positioned differentially by a text:

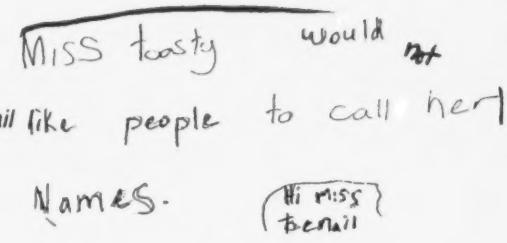


Stacey 6 ... *(right and below)*
S(tudents) *love (the) jokes T*(eacher) *I don't love* (the) *jokes*
Drawings:
Children laughing: speech bubbles*: ahhhhhhh*
Teacher laughing: label*: Miss T*

Miss Toasty is boring in the story (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)

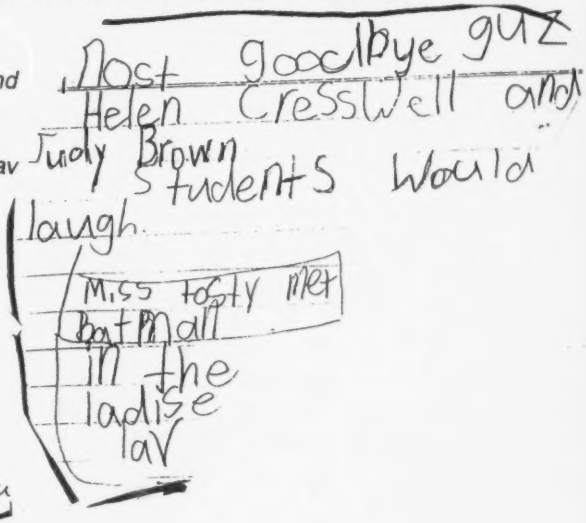


Anthea 7
Miss Toasty would not like people to call her names.
Drawing: *heads with speech bubble: Hi Miss Toenail (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

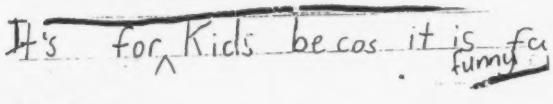


Others, while not demonstrating critical engagement with the text, produced work which I read as showing an understanding that the text has an intended audience:

Jack 7
Almost goodbye guzzler by Helen Cresswell and Judy Brown
Students would laugh
Miss Toasty met Bat man in the ladies lav (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)



Chan 6
It's for kids because it's funny (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)



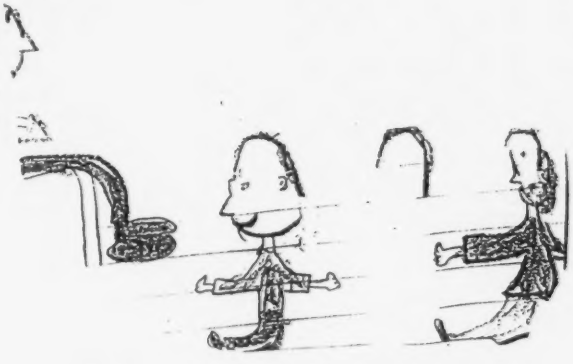
Nicole 7
It's for kids, Not true, made up things that make k(ids) laugh.
Drawing: *Brightly coloured: teacher sits on chair reading a book, students stand in front of her (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

Christy 8
Drawing: *Three female figures, brightly coloured, throwing a paper plane speech bubbles: Boy, this book is funny* and *This book is great! (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

Other students, including the youngest girls, three of the older boys and one of the oldest girls, produced responses that I read as showing that they positioned themselves as not required or perhaps not able to carry out the task on my terms, for example:

Alex 5
Drawing: *Two round bodied figures no clothes (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*

Rhianna 7
Drawing: *Brightly coloured: teacher sitting chair reading aloud to children sitting on floor, labelled Jack, Christy (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix D)*



Brett 8
Drawings:
Black figure sitting behind desk; speech bubble: *coolt*
Black figure sitting behind desk; speech bubble: *cookt (Students' drawings and writing, Appendix C)*

The aim of my critical project was to make a difference. The analysis of my students' responses to critically-framed tasks supports Mellor's and Patterson's (in preparation) contention that making multiple reading positions available is not enough. While some students were able to identify reading positions other than that offered explicitly by the text, there was no sign that others were hailed by a less oppressive reading. For example, my students were able to read my instruction: **Draw either something in the story students laugh at or something teachers would not like** *(Classroom chart, Appendix C)* as an invitation to take up the text's reading of classrooms as sites of teacher / student opposition. The challenge is to consider how to produce a critical discourse which, for texts like this, more explicitly gives rise to readings against the text.

I now turn to the transcript *(Appendix F),* recorded when I read aloud the text of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*. There many meanings available in the transcript; on this occasion I return to my planned **disruption of taken-for-granted aspects of this book in order to uncover how this aspect of my critical enterprise was played out in the classroom.** I consider first how one student contested the meaning of the lesson, then I investigate the struggle, contradictions and possibilities that accompanied my tentative critical discourse.

Contestation and possibility: The meaning of the lesson

Struggle over the meaning of that classroom episode is revealed when competing discourses are laid out for inspection, as for example, in the exchange below *(turns 80-84).* As I came to the end of an explication of the craftedness of the text, and started to frame a question, Jack took a position as an individual wanting information rather than a member of a group

'How very kind,' said Mrs Lane.
'Thank you.'
I told you Susie and Guzzler had
good manners. And hearts of gold.'
They thanked Mrs Lane, promised
to see her next week to do the
dusting, and went off with the lamp.
THE LAMP
fig vi

engaged in an analytic project. The complexity of my positioning is evident: I juggled critically-framed talk about the text and a child-centred discourse which read children's questions as springing from an individual (male) child's essential curiosity (see, for example, Clark 1989) before retaking / retaining control of the topic (Fairclough 1989: 135).

> **80. O'Brien:** And can you also see how whoever did the illustrations has put those two little hearts there. *(fig vi)* Right, here's the question. I want you to think about /
> **81. / Jack**: Why?
> **82. O'Brien**: Why hearts? Because of having hearts of gold. They had **hearts** of gold. And so there are the hearts of gold.
> **83. Jack:** THE LAMP (some background hubbub, unidentifiable)
> **84. O'Brien**: OK What is going to happen. Let's have thinking, hands up / *(Transcript, Appendix F)*

Contestation and possibility: Taking up a critical discourse ... tentatively

I made **texts a topic** of study rather than adopting the standard practice of sharing stories for enjoyment and comprehension (Baker 1991). I explained to the class how I intended to interrupt while I was reading aloud:

> **4. O'Brien**... What I'm going to do with *Almost Goodbye Guzzler* is stop every so often and ask you what you think is going to be happening next.... *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

I frequently used predictive questions during the course of previous reading aloud sessions, often as a way of checking that students were making use of the narrative devices to "follow" the story. This time, my use of these questions, as I tried to explain to my students, was different; I grappled with the challenge of drawing attention to **intertextual knowledge** and to its use by writers:

> **4. O'Brien**... Because one of the things I've (pause) discovered, that I've realised, is that very often with books the things that happen aren't that unusual. They're things that you are quite used to happening. They happen over and over in stories. You might have already discovered that. You think (pause) oh yes I know what's going to

happen next because you've already read that sort of thing in a story before. So we're going to see *(Transcript, Appendix F)*.

My hesitant, overworded (Fairclough 1989: 115) introduction of a critical discourse carried traces of:

- my positioning myself as a learner about critical analysis
- my struggle to introduce this new discourse in terms my students could engage with
- my attempt to diffuse classroom power, particularly when talking about texts.

It had an immediate impact: Louise interrupted; the first of a number of girls to take up textuality as the topic of the talk.

5. Student: (inaudible)
6. O'Brien: Sorry, Louise
7. Louise: What if its different?
8. O'Brien: It's great, I think. Don't you think it's great if it's different? If there's something unexpected. *(Transcript, Appendix F)*.

Christy also knew what I was talking about. She picked up on a different aspect of textuality, one that had been the focus of many classroom textual investigations during that year: the routine representation of female characters as objects of ridicule:

9. Christy: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* They always show teachers as stupid.
10. O'Brien: Yes that's true. They often do. Now we had got up to where people were collecting for the white elephant stall, isn't that right? *(Transcript, Appendix F)*.

Mrs Lane come back with her white elephant
Now - what about this? It's very old
Looks like Aladdin's lamp to me
What is it?
I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts!
fig vii

I was positioned by the girls' questions and comments as a fellow critical reader, but, at the same time, being constrained by the specific plans I had made to enact my agenda and by the exigencies of the whole group classroom setting, I did not take up their

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contributions more than minimally.

Lainie was another girl who took up a critical discourse. In the example below she worked with me in placing this narrative within a familiar tradition of story telling:

> **29. Lainie**: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* In some stories they've got dark walls and things and they've got spare parts and they've got old ladies living by themselves *(see fig vii for the representation of this in Almost goodbye, Guzzler)*
> **30. O'Brien**: So that's something you recognise as having old people living by themselves and **the darkness**.*(Transcript, Appendix F).*

And later, she adopted the discourse of textuality:

> **112. Lainie**: I reckon like Anthea's and Steven's. The genie's going to come out and he's going to say Thank goodness I've got out and he starts stretching himself ... And he asks You've got three wishes. And then the one who likes eating all the time says **I'll have bickies please**. *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

I summarised rather tentatively the position I was presenting for their consideration:

> **124. O'Brien**: Do you know what? It's almost as if the story has been written already, you people know so much about what's going to happen. *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

This hesitancy carried traces of the contradictions inherent in my positionings as teacher, student and critical reader, as I struggled to take up a critical discourse through which I could share my recent explorations of textuality and at the same time make space for children's readings. This was occurring in the context of a reading aloud session, a familiar classroom experience which carried its own complex sets of expectations for my students.

Christy had earlier demonstrated her willingness to work with me in making a critical reading of this text; at this point she again joined in my agenda. By picking up my statement *(turn 124 above)* and reformulating it she showed her understanding of the contention that "(t)exts are always already read and already written" (Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill in press: no pagination).

> **125. Christy**: It's written in our head *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

Not knowing how to take up and extend her contribution, I relinquished my role as a critical investigator of textuality and made several very teacherly moves: I acknowledged her contribution and participation yet at the same time appropriated her contribution by explaining what she meant:

> **126. O'Brien**: It's written in your head because you've heard it and read it already. /
> **127. / Students:** (hubbub of talk)
> **128. O'Brien**: Listen. Can I ask you something different? *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

Using a poststructuralist framework I read my perfunctory responses to Christy (and, on occasions, to other girls, for example in *Appendix F turns 96, 113, 115, 119*) as examples of the difficulty I found with finding a way to extend critical contributions into an exchange beyond acknowledgment or reformulation. In addition, an exchange such as *turns 9 and 10* above, represents the competing needs to get on with the story and at the same time to engage in critical talk with the girls.

This analysis puts on clear view other contradictions in my position: I propose to make available a critical text analysis to my students, but when faced with critical response to my critically- framed talk, questions and activities, I find it hard to know what to say. In contrast, as the example below shows, when faced with the boys' talk which positions them and me more in more familiar ways, for example, in a struggle over the meaning of the text or the lesson, I do know what to say:

> **36. Steven**: Why does he say what's for sweets?
> **37. Student**: What's for sweets, mum
> **38. O'Brien**: Parrots usually copy what people say. We haven't heard anyone say what's for sweets yet.
> **39. Jack**: She may have the radio on. The parrot's listening to it so he goes "This is BBC radio 4".
> **40. O'Brien**: Yeah.(much laughter) Now one of the things when you've got these books with all of that speech is to work out which bit comes first. Alex.
> **41. Student**: (inaudible)
> **42. O'Brien**: Alex, no need for tales. OK? I think it would be a good idea if you were much closer to the front, Alex. Down the front, please. Sit near me.
> **43. Steven**: (calling out) And Alex has to, too.
> **44. Jack**: Read what the parrot's saying now.

45. O'Brien: OK (continues reading aloud , to accompaniment of much laughter). That's Guzzler. Remember Guzzler? *(fig vii)*
46. Students: Yeah
47. O'Brien: He's always hungry so you get all this talk about food from Guzzler. (continues reading aloud) (pause while she waves an admonitory finger) In her hand there is (pauses significantly) .. the ...white elephant /.

I take up a more detailed exploration of this tension in Reading 2.

The biscuit tin emptied fast
Guzzler Gummidge wasn't called
Guzzler for nothing
Susie fed her biscuits to Emmitrude
because she liked to watch the
parrot's beak working. It seemed
to be on hinges.

fig vii

Exploring texts in new ways is hard work for teacher and students; the script for classroom exchanges has not been "already spoken" (Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill in press: no pagination) by many practitioners. Child-centred instruction, an authoritarian stance towards making meaning from texts and other conventional, traditional instructional practices have discourses to draw on. Conventional readings of texts and of teacher / student relationships offer ready-made responses to all parties, much as writers of children's novels make use of a range of already available characterisations, story lines and locations. **Reading lessons are already made. Their words are already said. Student / teacher relationships are expressed in recognisable forms. New conceptualisations of text-work require new practices.** The challenge is to adopt practices that will not only open up new possibilities but will begin to deal with taking action. Discursive practices in classrooms, however, form only part of the complex discursive and material practices in the communities outside schools, where children live out the rest of their lives. All these sites are implicated in the challenges to inequities I have proposed.

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In this reading I have focused on my struggle to find the positionings to make my readings of the text available to my young students in the face of the limited critical discourse and against the well-developed authoritarian discourse and child-centred discourse available to us all. At the same time I struggled to ensure that "commonsense" enjoyment was still available, while reading aloud from a text designed for silent reading not for hearing; which, in any case, presented problems for young readers in terms of its layout.

I struggled to find ways to talk to my students about positions towards reading and hearing and thinking and talking about texts that were almost as new for me as for them; whose place in the reconceptualisation of reading teaching and in my classroom practice I had been grappling with. I used rewording and overwording (Fairclough 1989: 113, 115) as I attempted to establish a critical discourse as an accepted component of a junior primary classroom and to introduce the concept, both difficult and unfamiliar, that the text was making use of already written narrative structures and events.

READING 2: ***I was about to say what Zoe said*** *(Transcript, Appendix F, turn 101)*

I explained in Chapter One the theoretical underpinnings of my move to include, as an element of a critical discourse, a challenge to authority relations between teacher and students which would make spaces for my students, particularly the girls, to speak from during reading lessons. When reading aloud *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* I took up positions as critical reader and teacher, making observations about my own reading experiences and making spaces available for students to join in the talk in the way I had framed it. As an alternative, I framed critical questions and invited students to respond from the same position.

I adopted **Critical Language Study** (Chapter Two: 42–43, this study) as both theoretical position and analytical technique in order to investigate the power struggles that occurred in the context of this pedagogical change I had introduced to my students who were familiar with child–centred and authoritarian discourses.

The transcript *(Appendix F)* of talk around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* was replete with demonstrations that the usual teacher–dominated classroom talk was disrupted by girls and boys self–selecting to take speaking turns, and by girls and boys interrupting (Fairclough 1989: 135–136). In Reading 2 I consider how these challenges to the taken–for–granted relations of authority might mean in the context of this reading aloud session, selecting a series of exchanges which **demonstrate the gendered responses made by students to my critical enterprise**.

Gendered responses to my critical enterprise

The differential responses by girls and by boys to my critically–framed talk, illustrate Weedon's contention that teaching practices are places of contestation, offering the potential both for producing change and for maintaining the status quo. (1987). I now show how girls positioned themselves as fellow critical readers; while boys, on the other hand, struggled with me and, to some extent, with the girls to preserve familiar meanings for lessons and for texts.

Girls **self–selected** during the exchange of critical talk

- to pose a question:

> **4. O'Brien**:... You think (pause) oh yes I know what's going to happen next because you've already read that sort of thing in a story before. So we're going to see
> **5. Student**: (inaudible)
> **6. O'Brien**: Sorry, Louise
> **7. Louise**: What if its different?
> **8. O'Brien:** It's great, I think. Don't you think it's great if it's different? If there's something unexpected. *(Transcript, Appendix F)*

- to exemplify the points I had made:

Christy: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* They always show teachers as stupid.
10. O'Brien: Yes that's true. They often do. The stupid teacher is pretty well out of this story now ... Now, we got up to where people were collecting for the white elephant stall I think isn't that right? *(Transcript, Appendix F)*

fig viii

and

28. O'Brien: Yeah those are those little biscuits and I guess they thought it was a catchy name for food. Lainie.
29. Lainie: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* In some stories they've got dark walls and things and they've got spare parts and they've got old ladies living by themselves. *(fig viii)* *(Transcript, Appendix F)*

- to reformulate what I had said:

124. O'Brien: Do you know what? It's almost as if the story has been written already, you people know so much about what's going to happen.
125. Christy: It's written in our head
126. O'Brien: It's written in your head because you've heard it and read it already. / *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

They **interrupted** to explain what I was saying:

161. O'Brien: Can you see? Can you see the balloons? Nothing in them, no little dots, nothing. *(fig ix)* No ideas at all. Next chapter is (continues reading aloud)
162. Anthea: There's nothing in because their minds are blank.
163. O'Brien: Their minds are blank because they were so because /
164. /Jack: It must be chapter ... *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

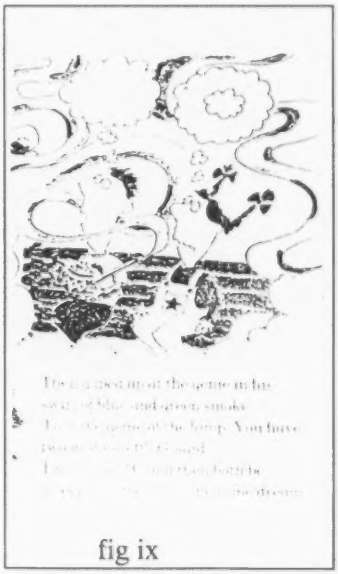
fig ix

They matched critically-framed questions with responses from the same position:

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88. O'Brien: Speak nice and loudly and clearly when you tell me what you think. **What's going to happen**? A lamp.....A lamp, an old lamp. Think about the things /
89. /Student: A genie
90. Jack: (inaudible) Ms O'Brien
91. /O'Brien: Excuse me. Think about the things you already know about stories with lamps in them and see
92. Student: That's the thing that probably made the magic /
93. Steven: (laughing inaudible comment)
94. /Student: A genius /
95. /O'Brien: OK People who have their hands up will the ones who get asked first of course. Anthea.
96. Anthea: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* It's going to become magic and a genie's going to come out and grant them wishes /
97. /Student: Yeah (quietly) *(Transcript, Appendix F)*

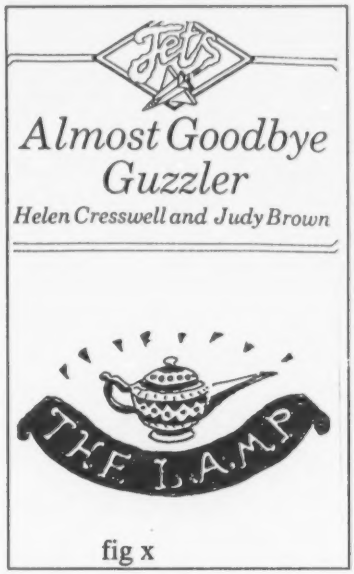


fig x

and

111. O'Brien: Well answered Steven. OK Lainie?
112. Lainie: I reckon like Anthea's and Steven's. The genie's going to come out and he's going to say Thank goodness I've got out and he' starts stretching himself ... And he asks You've got three wishes. And then the one who likes eating all the time says I'll have bickies please.
113. O'Brien: (Affirmative, smiling) Hm OK Let's hear from someone else. Lauren.
114. Lauren: (*aged 6, gaining confidence as a reader and writer)* She's got a lamp in her hand and she (inaudible).
115. O'Brien: OK What a lot of predictions. You know a lot about what happens in a story when a lamp comes in, don't you? Alison *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

These transcripts recording girls engaging with me in a critical discourse recalled for me the feminist poststructuralist literature which had so filled me with hope that I could make a difference: "(she is) capable of resistance and innovations" (Weedon 1987: 124). At the same time, as I show in Reading 3, I became aware that girls also resisted my attempts to engage them in new discursive practices.

Boys used the same strategies to enter the talk as the girls: they self-selected, they interrupted, they answered questions but (with one possible exception) they

avoided, resisted, undercut my offer to position themselves as critical readers. Instead they engaged in struggle over the meaning of the lesson.

The struggle between Jack and me over the meaning of the reading aloud sessions around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*, the text he had wanted to read aloud to the class himself, was embodied in his contest with me for control over the topic:

> **58. O'Brien**: Right here's my very first question to you.
> **59. Jack**: (persisting) ... the title page
> **60. O'Brien:** No it's not. I'm going to read (recorder turned off at this point) ... the question. It's really important to have the question ...
> **61. Jack**: (still persisting) ... the title page, Ms O'Brien
> **62. O'Brien**: The title page, Jack? Oh the title page.
> **63. Jack**: It's got THE LAMP (voice of gloomy significance) *(see fig x)*
> **64. O'Brien**: The lamp. And that explains that voice you're using too. (hubbub of voices trying out THE LAMP)
> **65. O'Brien**: Here's Mrs Lane talking. (reads) Now that's the picture and here is /
> **66. /Jack**: (inaudible) down there
> **67. O'Brien**: /let's try. cocky first. (reads to accompaniment of raucous laughter). Now here are the two children (reads) and Guzzler (reads)
> **68. Jack**: Ms O'Brien *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

Boys positioned themselves in opposition to the critical talk as individuals with curiosity to be satisfied, with jokes to make; as readers with a text to enjoy but not to critique:

> **88. O'Brien**: Speak nice and loudly and clearly when you tell me what you think. What's going to happen. A lamp.....A lamp, an old lamp. Think about the things /
> **89. /Student**: A genie
> **90. Jack:** (inaudible) Ms O'Brien
> **91. /O'Brien**: Excuse me. Think about the things you already know about stories with lamps in them and see
> **92. Student**: That's the thing that probably made the magic /
> **93. Steven:** (laughing inaudible comment)
> **94. /Student**: A genius / *(Transcript, Appendix F)*

On two of the three occasions when boys took up a critically- framed question, their response took the talk away from text analysis: Jack retold the story (which he had already read) and Steven made use of a girl's answer to position himself as an honest struggler.

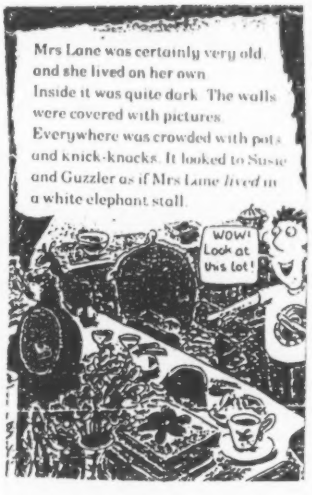
To illustrate, I briefly examine how Steven responded to this question:

88. O'Brien: Speak nice and loudly and clearly when you tell me what you think. **What's going to happen?** A lamp.....A lamp, an old lamp. Think about the things / *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

The following extract shows how Steven succeeded in making me his ally in a struggle to appropriate a girl's answer and to use it as his entry–token to the critical talk. Steven took over Anthea's contribution to my critically– framed question, reformulated it, and rendered it nonsense. Nonetheless he took up a position of power so complete that I encouraged him to try to rework Anthea's answer until it became his own, and then at the end acknowledged his contribution:

100. O'Brien: Steven what do you say.
101. Steven: I was about to say what Anthea said.
102. O'Brien: Well can you say it again in your own words.
103. Jack:(inaudible calling out)
104. O'Brien: That's twice you've called out. Hands should be up.
105. O'Brien: Steven can you say it again in your own words please.
106. Steven: Well, they're gunna get their own ?missions and ? roy and ? because ? going to say it
107. O'Brien: What, the lamp will say something to them?
108. Steven: Yeah
109. O'Brien: Do you have any idea about how they'll find out it's magic?
110. Steven: No (speculative muttering from group)
111. O'Brien: Well answered Steven. OK Lainie?
(Transcript, Appendix F).

My research questions (Chapter Two: 42, this study) were designed to investigate the contradictions and possibilities inherent in the positionings made available to my students and to me by the language practices in reading aloud sessions. This analysis reveals how, as a teacher committed to engaging my students in a critical enterprise, I struggled with their competing positioning of themselves within a child–centred discourse. At least part of the time I operated within a critical discourse relatively unfamiliar to all of us in order to make it possible for my students to think and talk about how


Mrs Lane was certainly very old
and she lived on her own.
Inside it was quite dark. The walls
were covered with pictures.
Everywhere was crowded with pots
and knick-knacks. It looked to Susie
and Guzzler as if Mrs Lane *lived* in
a white elephant stall.
WOW!
Look at
this lot!
fig xi

Almost goodbye, Guzzler worked in relation to other texts. At the same time my students and I drew on a familiar child-centred position which authorised students to talk about aspects of the text that interested them. In practice it was two of the boys who made extensive use of this authorisation. Their prolonging the discussion around the question *What are nick nacks?* (*turns 20-28, below*) demonstrated how in practice I was trapped by both the critical discourse and the child-centred discourse into authorising an exchange that effectively took the talk some distance from the text.

> **20. Students**: What are nick nacks? *(see fig xi)*
> **21. O'Brien**: Nick knacks are ...
> **22. Jack**: (*aged 7; a confident, competent reader and writer*) Little things that you don't need any more
> **23. O'Brien** Yeah little things. Not necessarily things that you don't need any more. Things that are around the place.
> **24. Students**: (hubbub of sound)
> **25. Steven**: (*aged 6 gaining confidence as reader and writer*) Nik nax are sometimes when you have snacks
> **26. O'Brien**: That is a food. Someone made that up. Nik nax I think they say don't they.
> **27. Student**: Yeah
> **28. O'Brien**: Yeah those are those little biscuits and I guess they thought it was a catchy name for food. *(Transcript, Appendix F).*

ISSUES ARISING ...

Almost goodbye, Guzzler was chosen by Jack to read aloud and subsequently appropriated by me. Not only did I take over the act of reading aloud, but I also introduced a particular discourse around the text, one which required a different set of practices from those usually found around a rollicking, enjoyable novel. I disrupted Jack's expectation, conferred by practices around a child-centred discourse, that he, in a sense owned the text and could make decisions about how it could be used. The accounts I have provided in Readings 1 and 2 reveal contestation over the way the text was used, suggesting that issues around who chooses the texts used in classrooms and who makes decisions about how they are used are important sites for pedagogical theorising and research still to be explored.

In Reading 3 I explore the language practices around *Beware of the aunts (Appendix I),* a picture book chosen not by a student but by the teacher. My exploration reveals girls and their female teacher dominating the talk around a text and considers the problematic nature of some of the talk.

READING AROUND *BEWARE OF THE AUNTS*

SELECTING TEXTS TO READ ALOUD

My decision to read aloud *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) *(the text is reproduced in Appendix G; the cover is reproduced in fig i)*, the positions I adopted towards the text, and the classroom organisation I put into place were informed by my multiple positionings. I raise only four of many possibilities:

- classroom teacher
- experienced teacher
- critical practitioner
- feminist poststructuralist practitioner.

Classroom teacher

As a classroom teacher with a class of lively 5 to 8 year olds, I regularly chose to read aloud texts:

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fig i

- that were by recognised writers of quality children's "literature"
- that I judged my students would enjoy, would find funny and engaging.

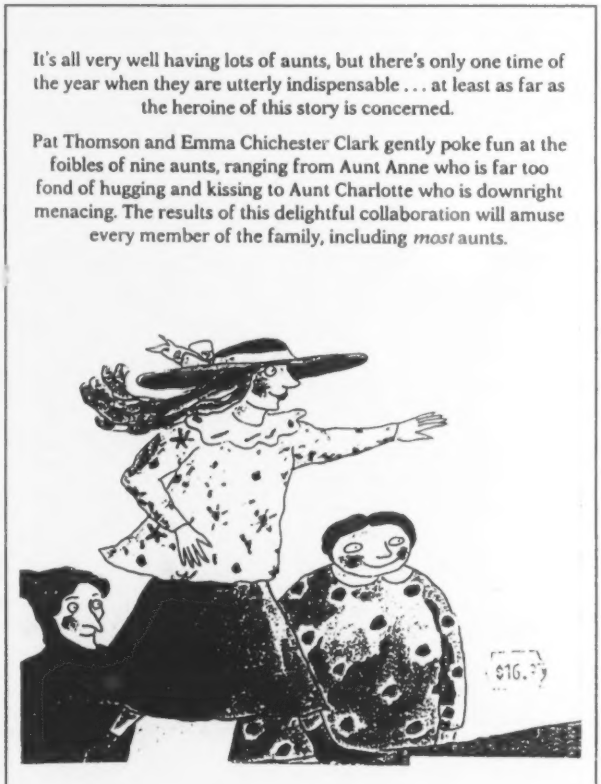
Critical practitioner

As a critical practitioner seeking to meet Lankshear's challenge to reconsider the "real" uses of reading and writing (1989: 74) I was prepared to confront another of the many potentially sexist texts about aunts written for young children, taking as one of my points of reference my ongoing response to Christy's observation made earlier in the year that she'd noticed that writers often wrote about "mean" aunts.

Feminist poststructuralist practitioner

As a socially critical practitioner taking a feminist poststructuralist stance towards the literacy practices in my classroom I judged from the title and the cover "blurb" *(fig ii)* that *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) offered possibilities for:

- continuing my project of raising with my students "questions about the versions of the social world, particularly the inequities in gender relations, constructed in and by their classroom texts" (Chapter One: 10, this study)
- "challenging teacher / student / text authority relations by ensuring that


It's all very well having lots of aunts, but there's only one time of the year when they are utterly indispensable . . . at least as far as the heroine of this story is concerned.
Pat Thomson and Emma Chichester Clark gently poke fun at the foibles of nine aunts, ranging from Aunt Anne who is far too fond of hugging and kissing to Aunt Charlotte who is downright menacing. The results of this delightful collaboration will amuse every member of the family, including *most* aunts.
74
fig ii

my students' readings would be heard and considered as well as my own" (Chapter One: 18, this study)

- "showing us the ideological construction of texts and offering us possibilities for remaking them" (Chapter One: 21, this study)
- looking for the subject positions made available by this text, and considering the different ways my students could position themselves (Chapter One: 8, this study)
- using the deconstructive technique of disrupting students' expectations before they have begun to read with the aim of "bringing to the foreground and then inspecting aspects of the text that are generally taken for granted" (Chapter One: 22, this study)
- using Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill's contention that "(t)exts are always already read and already written" (in press) in order to explore with my students how texts work to produce meanings and recruit particular readers.

Experienced teacher

As an experienced teacher, exploring the possibilities of socially critical discourse, my practices around literacy teaching were of interest to tertiary teachers (Comber 1993; Comber and O'Brien 1993; Comber et al 1994). The talking, drawing and writing around *Beware of the aunts* (Thomson 1991) occurred in two separate episodes. While I examine only the second of these in the present study, its direction was informed by my plans for the first. The first episode was video taped as part of a series showing trainee teachers some of the ways in which teachers in socio-economically disadvantaged areas tackled literacy teaching. When planning these lessons, I outlined my stance towards the text and the techniques I would adopt in order to investigate the text. In addition, for the first lesson, as a guide both for my students, the camera crew and me, I assigned tentative timings for the

proposed lesson segments and identified student groupings and locations. During the video taped lesson, students made predictions about the representations of the aunts in the story and listened to and talked about part of the text. The talk I examine in this study occurred five days later and was informed by the same lesson plan and by the activities and talk that had occurred in the previous lesson.

READING 3: *It's not fair. My aunts aren't like that.* *(Transcript I, turn 204)*

I base Reading 3 on the transcript of talk *(Appendix I)* around *Beware of the aunts (full text is reproduced in Appendix G)*. Of the many possibilities for critical investigation associated with the positionings outlined above, this reading draws on only the **feminist poststructuralist** project of **problematising the construction of gender in and by classroom practices.** In order to take account of my role as participant / researcher, explicitly aware of the discursive practices available in my classroom, I have selected as my focus **how I am implicated in the construction of gender produced in and by language practices around *Beware of the aunts*.** I first make a brief quantitative analysis of who is heard to speak. I then turn to the talk that hailed these speakers and to the positions my students and I take up with regard to women and textuality.

Whom did my talk hail?

Preliminary analysis of the talk around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* (Chapter Two: 38, this study) together with the analysis undertaken in Readings 1 and 2 revealed that my plan to make available speaking positions to girls was undercut by my taking up a child-centred discourse which sanctioned Jack's displays of "ownership " of the text. I thus gave implicit permission to boys to play out agendas which competed with my critical project. A similar quantitative analysis of the talk around *Beware of*

the aunts demonstrated that my language practices once again "hailed" class members very unevenly. Again, half the class took no identifiable part in the talk; again, my students and I shared the speaking turns almost equally. But this time, about 85% of the turns were shared by me and six girls. In this reading, I first examine the talk that called on my students to consider taken-for-granted notions about women in their classroom texts. I then turn to some of the positions about women and textuality enacted by my talk.

Producing old stories

The extract from the transcript of the talk around *Beware of the aunts* reproduced below illustrates how I adopted a number of discourses. Guided by these into taking up competing positions, I drew on discourses familiar (progressivist, child-centred) and unfamiliar (critical) to me and my students. In so doing, I produced both the confusion predicted by feminist poststructuralist literature and old stories, already told, about women and about texts.

I used open-ended questioning so that my students could make **their own discoveries**:

> 42. **O'Brien**: Hmmm. Remember to talk up really loudly because I hope that will come out very clearly. OK. What about any other aunts who are in the story that we haven't remembered reminded people about? Mark?
> 43. **Mark**: Oh, the lady who loves sewing. *(Appendix I)*

I used carefully-framed critical questions so that students could think in new ways about their texts. In this case, I asked how the writer of the book had produced the particular reading that I had in mind; **but which my child-centred discourse was reluctant to allow me to name in case I gave the students my answers and not theirs.** Thus did the old and familiar discourse undercut the unfamiliar new:

> 40. **O'Brien**: OK. So you remember that one very clearly, don't you? What did Pat Thomson seem to be saying about her in the story?

(*Pause from students.*) Any ideas about that? That's hard. That's a different sort of question. Anthea, what do you think?
41. **Anthea**: She's really bad and nobody really likes her because she eats the sandwiches and no one gets anything to eat *(Appendix I)*

and

44. **O'Brien**: Hm Hm. OK. And what did Pat Thomson seem to be saying about the one who loved sewing? Stacey? *(fig iii)*
45. **Stacey**: (just 7, a confident reader and writer). (inaudible)
46. **O'Brien**: Uhuh. Anyone else? Rhianna?
47. **Rhianna**: She likes making her own clothes. *(Appendix I)*

Auntie Zara likes sewing. She makes all her own clothes.
Dad says you can tell she does. I think she must like very bright colours. She once made a dress out of a bedspread. She kept falling over the fringe.
fig iii

Trying to tease out for my students as well as for myself the unfamiliar issue of how a particular reading is produced, I used a good – bad dualism, and thereby activated the discourse of recycling, pervasive in young children's schooling, yet totally unexpected to me in the context of a critical examination of gendered characterisations.

48. **O'Brien**: OK. And is this a successful thing that she does. Or is Pat Thomson or is Pat Thomson making that out to be a good thing or a bad thing.
49. **A few voices**: A good thing
50. **O'Brien**: In what way? In what way?
51. **Anthea**: It's a good thing that she's recycling things like the bedspread. *(Appendix I).*

I did not know what to do with Anthea's response; I turned again to a simple opposition, trying to suggest without telling her that she might be making a different reading from the one dominant in the text. Anthea, however, was used being asked to speculate on the interior of stories, to search for the underlying logic, to read a story so that it made sense (Baker and Freebody 1989). So she dealt with my question as an invitation to suggest how the aunt might have turned a bedspread into a dress:

> 52. **O'Brien**: Is that what Pat Thomson's saying or what you're saying, Anthea?
> 53. **Anthea**: It's what I'm saying. She once made something out of a bedspread and she must have had a hole right in the middle of it which was big enough for her head so she must have made a dress out of it.

Trapped in a recycling discourse that could not be challenged, so dominant was it in children's lives, in a progressivist discourse that proclaimed that Anthea must make her own discoveries, in a child-centred discourse that authorised Anthea's speculation, and in a critical discourse which encouraged this concentration on women as a topic, I still wanted to show my students that unacceptable readings of the aunts were encouraged by the text. I turned to a dualism again, this time hoping to throw doubt on the text's construction of the aunt. When Anthea continued to work to maintain her grip on the familiar talk about recycling, I turned to some old-fashioned direct teaching *(turns 57 and 59)*, drawing attention to the collusion between the illustration and verbal text that produced a negative reading about the aunt's dressmaking skills. The result was no better. Neither girls or boys were ready to concede a space to the unfamiliar discursive practices I was encouraging.

> 54. **O'Brien**: OK fine. You're saying it is a good thing. Do you think Pat Thomson is saying it's a good thing or a bad thing?
> 55. **Voices**: Good thing
> 56. **Anthea**: It's good that she's recycling.
> 57. **O'Brien**: OK. What about this other comment here. (Reading) "I'm afraid she sometimes makes us things". Is that a good thing or a bad thing about that aunt?
> 58. **Voices**: Good!
> 59. **O'Brien**: Have a good look at the picture. *(fig iv)*
> 60. **Rhianna**: Bad!

61. **O'Brien**: What makes you say that, Rhianna?
62. **Rhianna**: Because the sleeves are too long and they don't look right on them.
63. **O'Brien**: Anyone else agree with Rhianna?
64. **Voices**: No, (and a hubbub, indecipherable)
65. **O'Brien**: Just a minute. Excuse me. We need one at a time. Jane would you say that again?
66. **Jane**: The sleeve is too long for the Dad's arm to fit through.
67. **O'Brien**: OK Mark what were you saying?
68. **Mark**: The hat should go on the dad what the boy's wearing. The skirt what the girl's wearing should go on the mum and the dad should keep the blue jumper and just cut it um trim it.
69. **Voice**: The dad's
70. **Rhianna**: (calling above the noise) Can I say something about the dad *(Appendix I)*.

I was stuck in the dualism; I could find no other way to probe with my students the negative view of the aunts that the text, to my feminist gaze, was so clearly promoting. In the event, my confusion of discourses produced student talk that abandoned the subject of women and textuality and instead dissected the graphic evidence of bad dressmaking found in the illustrations. My question had lead them into a sort of problem-solving exercise; the talk had wandered far from a critical discourse.

fig iv

Producing new and old stories

... about women

The topic of the classroom talk I initiated was *women*: the book we were sharing was written and illustrated by women; the teacher was a woman; the book was about women; was told by a girl. And as the brief quantitative analysis showed, student talk about the text was dominated by girls. I now consider some of the positions about women produced in the course of the talk around the text

I offered positions alternate to those constructed in and by this text and, by extension, to those positions offered by other texts we had shared during the year. The extract below shows how, after treading carefully in the name of students making their own discoveries *(for example, turns 40 and 44)*, I took up a more confronting approach, invoking the poststructuralist technique of disruption to draw attention to the ideological content:

81. O'Brien: Can I keep going. (Reads) "My aunt Mary is very kind." OK Well so far we've had a fat aunt that Pat Thomson's made fun of. We've had one who has a fur coat that //
82. // Anthea: (calling out) Loves sewing! //
83. O'Brien: who loves sewing who's which Pat Clark has made fun of //. *(Appendix I)*.

My Aunt Mary is very kind. The only thing wrong with her is my cousin, Rodney. Rodney wins medals for ballroom dancing.
He is always clean and neat. He likes being with grown-ups and handing round tea on the lawn.

fig v

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In effect, I threw doubt on readings of the text as a bit of harmless fun, an innocent store of entertainment to be recollected, speculated about and enjoyed. I disrupted a view of aunts as fit objects of ridicule. At the same time I ran the risk of so upsetting my students' expectations about proper readings of a text like this and of reading aloud lessons that a struggle over the agenda could emerge.

I continued to disrupt the innocence of the text by explicitly drawing attention to the way the verbal text and illustrations worked together to produce a sardonic commentary on the idea of one of these aunts being *kind:*

> **84.** // **Voices**: hubbub //
> **85.** // **O'Brien**: the kissing one Pat Thomson made fun of. What about this one. "My aunt Mary is very kind." So it sounds as if she's going to be ...
> **86. Anthea**: a good aunt!
> **87. O'Brien**: Nice. A good aunt. Keep listening. //
> **88.** // **Voice**: a good aunt
> **89. O'Brien**: Keep listening and see if she surprises you. "There's only one thing wrong with her" Oh sorry "My aunt Mary is very kind. The only wrong the only thing wrong with her is my cousin Rodney. He wins medals for ballroom dancing" (continues reading aloud) So the aunt is kind. Is there a but in that picture? *(Appendix I.) (fig v)*

As I noted earlier, I asked students to use their intertextual knowledge to make drawings predicting the sorts of aunts they expected to find in this book. During this session I posed a question designed to explore with them the notion that Pat Thomson may have used already available versions of femininity, tapping into readers' sense of being in the know about the topic of the book and thus enacting a sexist discourse:

> **168. O'Brien**: Please stop talking about Christmas and start listening. Did. First question. I'm hoping to get some fantastic answers. First question. Did Pat Thomson surprise you in the way she wrote about the aunts?
> **169. Voices**: Yes. ... No.
> **170. O'Brien**: Now, remember I got you to say, tell me some of the aunts you think she'll put in the book and you drew about four different aunts. Did she surprise you? *(Appendix I).*

Anthea avoided the critical implications and gave the sort of speculative answer that is often called for in talk about texts with young children (Baker and Freebody 1989):

> **169. Anthea**: No
> **170. O'Brien**: OK. Anthea, what's your answer?
> **171. Anthea**: No, aunts could be like that. You never know. *(Appendix I).*

In contrast, however, my question produced from Christy a response that reiterated her position that writers treat aunts unfairly. She drew on her knowledge of how texts commonly position aunts and her own life experience to critique the view of aunts produced by this text.

> **172. O'Brien**: OK Can you stop for a moment Anthea, please. Anthony, I need to remind you that it's looking around this way, turned around this way, body around this way, facing around this way (waits for a few seconds for Anthony to move) Right. Did she surprise you in the aunts she chose.
> **173. Voices**: No // Yes
> **174. O'Brien**: OK. Who could say a little more about that? I'll come back **to you in a moment, Steven. Umm, Christy.**
> **175. Christy**: I think writers always write books about mean aunts.
> **176. O'Brien**: Can you talk really loudly so it comes out.
> **177. Christy**: They usually write about mean aunts but they're usually very nice, because mine is. *(Appendix I).*

... about texts and about life

In this section I show that a critically-framed question, designed to disrupt taken-for-granted acceptance of Pat Thomson's construction of aunts, produced both critical and unproblematised readings of the text. Anthea again positioned herself in opposition to critical questions: the very suggestion that I was about to ask another provocative question drew this *segue* from her: the sort of speculation about the illustrations authorised by any number of discourses available in a junior primary classroom:

> **193. O'Brien**: // Now these here's another question
> **194. Anthea**: I've got something really funny about this page //
> **195. O'Brien**: // Yes

> **196. Anthea**: About that bit. It looks like she is a witch because the roof looks like a garden sort of thing with flowers growing from it.
> **197. O'Brien**: Yes That's supposed to be inside.
> **198. Anthea**: I know but she might have changed the roof into that so she could // *(Appendix I).*

I took control, cutting off Anthea in order to pose a critically-framed question *(below, turns 199, 201)* designed to encourage students to read against the dominant, sexist position taken by the text (Mellor and Patterson, in preparation):

> **199. O'Brien**: // OK Here's the next question. You are an aunt.
> **200. Voice**: No I'm not.
> **201. O'Brien**: Pretending. Pretending. (over quiet hubbub about pretending to be an aunt) that you are an aunt. How would you feel about the way Pat Thomson's written about you, about people like you in the book? *(Appendix I).*

This question hailed a critically-positioned analysis of the text wherein Stacey exposed the ideological content and then drew on her own lived experience to reject it:

> **201. O'Brien**: ... Can we have hands up for answers. Stacey? this is Stacey Reilly, aged?
> **202. Stacey**: Seven.
> **203. O'Brien**: 7? Go!
> **204. Stacey**: Not nice!
> **205. O'Brien**: Could you explain that Stacey?
> **206. Stacey**: She says that the aunts are mean, she says that they don't let her like the aunt that says that children aren't allowed in her special room! It's not fair. My aunts aren't like that. *(Appendix I).*

It produced other responses relating the content of the text to students' own lives, authorised to some extent by a critical position (eg Lankshear 1989) but, much more familiarly, by a child-centred position. In the example below, Steven used the chance not to critique the text's view of aunts, but to imply a criticism of his own aunt's behaviour:

> **207. O'Brien**: Right, Stacey. That's beautifully explained. Rhianna would you //
> **208. Steven**: // My aunt doesn't let me go in her special room! *(Appendix I).*

I managed to resist this opening (compare my collusion in Steven's reading of the topic of the lesson discussed in Reading 2). I posed my question again, selecting and extending and validating the responses of two girls who had in the past spoken out against sexist content in classroom texts:

We have to wash our hands all the time. Her kitchen is like a hospital. Her floor is like a skating rink.

fig vi

209. O'Brien: She might have a reason for it. I've just realised! Rhianna would you explain? You are an aunt. How would you feel about being written about like this in a book?
210. Rhianna: I wouldn't feel very nice because something I would and something I wouldn't because somethings she's written nice things about and some of it hasn't so I wouldn't be very //
211. O'Brien: // Could give me an example of something nice she's written?
212: Rhianna: Well she likes to make her own clothes and she doesn't have to buy much, only a couple of things.
213. O'Brien: True. Very true. Plus the recycling you noticed was a good thing didn't you?
214. Rhianna: Yeah ... yeah
215. O'Brien: Christy. How about you. How would you feel?
216. Christy: Really upset. Because aunties are never hardly mean like that. *(Appendix I)*

However, Steven soon made another attempt to turn the topic from the analytical to the personal, joined this time by two other boys and one of the youngest girls. The extract below reveals how I first implied encouragement of their positioning *(turn 211),* and then rejection of it by posing the critically-framed question yet again:

217. O'Brien: Right OK. //
218. // Steven: My auntie ... (inaudible)
219. O'Brien: Can you wait? Mark what did you meant to say?
210. Mark: My aunties don't tell me to wash my hands every minute of the day.
211. O'Brien: And did you notice in the picture that she's looking at their hands through a magnifying glass to specially inspect them. *(fig vi)*
212. Voice: No! (Delighted giggle)

> **213. O'Brien**: I just noticed that a minute ago. Steven. What's your answer. How would feel about the way it was written, you're written about? *(Appendix I)*.

I deliberately asked students to use their lived experience to critique the text. However, it seems to me to be a technique with some problematical aspects. In the first place, students may not recognise their experience as a possible source of a resistant positioning. Their experience as young students, positioned in a child-centred discourse, is that their own contribution and experiences are valued because they are their own, not for some other use that may be made of them. Secondly, students can only draw on the resources they bring: their everyday life, including the constructs about the social world and its relationships associated with their communities. It is quite possible that all of this may well connect into the constructions produced in classroom text and thus authorise inequities. The question that I face as a teacher is how to suggest that there may be other ways of being in the world apart from the ways that have hailed my students.

As Weedon (1987) argued, discourses are constantly vying for power. However, I failed to anticipate the vigour with which many of my students were prepared to see in my introduction of a critical discourse fresh opportunities for struggles over already occupied ground. Neither was I prepared for the alacrity with which other students took up the possibilities offered them to critique gendered constructions of women in their texts.

Chapter Four

CONCLUSIONS

> (A)n emancipatory, critical social science must be premised upon the development of research approaches **which empower those involved to change as well as (to) understand the world.** *(my emphasis)* (Lather, 1991b: 3)

OVERVIEW

In Chapter One I used the metaphor of a spiral to explain the interrelationship between theory and practice that drove both my classroom action and this present study. I now consider the findings that emerged from this study and their relationship with my initial theorising and with new theoretical positions I wish now to take up; and their implications for future work at the intersections of pedagogy, theory and research.

The age of my students, my own understanding of the theoretical ideas, and the experimental nature of the deconstructive techniques, taken together with the competing and parallel interests of my students, embedded as they were in existing discursive practices, critical readings of texts a very uncertain venture. Indeed, as the multiple readings of research materials given in Chapter Three showed, my critical project with its feminist poststructuralist focus produced the following confusions, challenges and possibilities for change:

- Contradictory discourses including critical, authoritarian, child–centred, progressivist
- Contestation between teachers and students over the meanings of the lesson and the text

- Readings critiquing gendered versions of the social world produced in and by classroom texts.

These readings showed that the difficulties I faced in making available a critical discourse were embedded in the complex intersections between:

- the competing discursive positions available in classrooms
- my focus on activities and talk designed to reveal ideological content of texts
- my introduction of a discourse which in some respects was close to existing discourses and thus blurred for me the boundaries between critical discourse and a child-centred discourse. This new discourse, however, provoked in a number of students some very clear boundary patrolling designed to keep me to the familiar discourses.

PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF THE CRITICAL DISCOURSE

The study revealed the problematic aspects of introducing into a classroom a new discourse which both explicitly and implicitly problematised existing discursive practices with regard who spoke, the topic of the talk, the meanings of the lessons, and whose interests were taken into account. And where, at the same time, these existing discourses were naturalised and taken-for-granted.

The readings show me taking up more successfully the diffusing power aspect of the critical enterprise because it fits more easily with the discourse of child-centred individualism: in fact there is cross-over between the two discourses which make analysis difficult.

COMPETING DISCURSIVE POSITIONS

The critical discourse I made available was taken up differentially by girls and by boys. I offered positionings which produced a number of girls who worked **with** me to make socially critical readings both of texts and of the meanings of the lessons, as well as girls who took up readings from other than critical positions. On the other hand, the critical discourse produced boys who contested both my construction of them as critical text analysts and my designation of reading aloud sessions as sites for new discursive practices.

Boys did not share my readings of the meanings of the lesson or of the texts. Rather, they engaged in readings contesting my readings of the text and of the classroom situation. My speculation is that they had a sense of threat produced by my putting on the agenda the status quo which produced and maintained their power base as **other** to girls and women. As a consequence, they took up the old discourses of contestation with the teacher, of a child-centred freedom to voice their opinion and to have their say on matters which appealed to them. In the process they worked on their sense of themselves as individuals acting in the classroom. And, as classroom teacher and critically-reflective practitioner, I was implicated in the positions they took up.

I was familiar with their positioning of themselves as other to me and to the tasks I required. At the same time, I had authorised the discourses they were making use of. I knew therefore how to engage them and, in so doing, I fell into their power struggles. I knew how to extend their "interest" in the text; I knew the penalties for me and for class order of ignoring their interruptions, their self-selection and of giving too much attention to girls. Thus I took up more readily boys' discourse of individualism than I did the girls' critical talk. Although girls often engaged with my critical project, I found a challenge in knowing how to take up new practices which could produce a new discourse.

THE IMPACT OF EXISTING DISCOURSES

This study has shown the importance of examining how existing pedagogical discourses, particularly the child-centred, impact on a critical agenda. The readings of classroom material revealed how existing practices associated with the old positions are preserved (such as struggle for control of the agenda and idiosyncratic readings of the text) and demonstrated how easy it is for a teacher to engage in power struggles over the meaning of the lesson and to collude with readings of texts sanctioned by individualism.. So, of my critical projects, those that were at first glance closest to my existing practice (that is, authorising students to speak and to make multiple readings of texts) assumed that students would take up these positions as critical speakers and readers. In practice, this unexamined offering of new discursive practices within the context of existing practices simply validated students' taking up old positions, and telling familiar stories with their usual vigour.

Readings are socially constructed, not neutral or innocent. The advocacy by Lather (19991a, 1991b) of the freely arrived at and liberating readings, fails to problematise the positions from which people might make these readings. "Making available" a critical discourse is therefore not enough. Enacted as it was in my classroom, where students were authorised to have their say, to speak, to make public their readings of the text (in the same way as teachers have always been authorised to make their readings), the effect was close to a child-centred position which gives students permission to voice their essential individualism. In the lesson recorded around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*, boys' talk was heard far more than girls' talk; and the teacher still spoke more than anyone. My readings demonstrated the problematic aspects of giving space to students to talk freely about the text at the same time as making critical positions available. This position suggesting that students responses are in some way innocent, untouched by power relationships, essentially worth hearing and outside gendered responses, is in itself naive. As I

show in Chapter Three, the practice produced girls who read both with and against the teacher and boys who read both against the teacher and against the girls.

I argue, with Mellor and Patterson (in preparation), that making multiple readings is not enough. This practice is predicated on a position that alternate, resistant readings are available to all students. Teacher action needs to be taken so that students who have no experience of taking different positions can be encouraged to "view reading as a practice or as the operation of sets of techniques for producing a specific reading or readings" (Mellor and Patterson in preparation: 30).

RESISTING A NEW ORTHODOXY

Exploring texts in new ways is hard work for teacher and students; child–centred instruction, an authoritarian stance towards making meaning from texts and other conventional, traditional instructional practices draw on existing discourses. Conventional readings of texts and of teacher / student relationships offer ready–made responses, much as writers of children's novels make use of a range of already available characterisations, story lines and locations. In a sense, reading lessons are already made. Their words are already said; positions are established: student teacher relationships are expressed in recognisable and easily reproducible forms. My analysis of the discursive practices around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* and *Beware of the aunts* classroom materials uncovered, in the attention I paid what to say and how to say it, some anxiety about using the right techniques and the right talk to achieve a critical literacy. There is a possibility that a critical pedagogy will become the new orthodoxy, the new already written. The challenge is not only to find new tasks, activities and questions that will throw doubt on existing social relations, but to examine existing practices and reconsider their potential to get in the way of making a difference. New conceptualisations of text work require new discursive practices.

POSSIBILITIES

My project was designed to offer different subject positions to all students, but particularly to girls. While many students enacted existing discourses, some girls did take up new, socially-critical positions. The multiple readings reveal that girls not only read with me, some started to carve out their own positions. My speculation is that identifying the ideological content of their texts gave girls a new position to read from; one which offered a new range of meanings for themselves as girls and, perhaps, fresh possibilities for acting in the world. Indeed, despite the contradictions and struggles, critical talk did go on, and girls did most of it. Teachers and students did work together to accomplish a new and challenging discourse. However, until boys are also able to take up new positions, it will be a long time before the possibilities inherent in a critical discourse will be realised: change will be a long time coming. At the same time, it is important for teachers to remember that boys' views of how they are in the world is produced by the discursive and material practices of their social circumstances, not just by what happens in their classrooms. Changes need to happen in other places as well as in classrooms.

TAKING ACTION

I now signal two issues for investigation which have been opened up for me by this project. The first concerns the limits of critical text analysis of the kind undertaken by my students and me: exploration of ideological content in is important, but it is not enough. In this study I have shown what happened in my classroom when I drew on theoretical positions and research findings to use new techniques in order to make available to my students and myself new positions. The next steps are to consider the problematic impact on new practices of existing practices and to investigate how our new practices can lead to new actions.

"OWNERSHIP"

Finally, I would like to problematise and open up for inspection the discursive possibilities embedded in notions of "ownership" associated with selection of texts by students and teacher. I recounted in Readings 1 and 2 how I disrupted Jack's expectation, conferred by practices around a child-centred discourse, that having selected and rehearsed *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*, he was in a position to decide how it could be used. My decisions to read the text aloud myself, and to use it as a site for critical consideration, were produced by my feminist stance. Clearly the two decisions brought me into conflict with Jack. The accounts I have provided in Readings 1 and 2 reveal contestation over the way the text was used, suggesting that issues around who chooses the texts used in classrooms and who makes decisions about how they are used are important sites for pedagogical theorising and research.

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APPENDICES

MATERIALS AROUND *ALMOST GOODBYE, GUZZLER,* HELEN CRESSWELL AND JUDY BROWNE, LONDON: YOUNG LIONS, 1990.

APPENDIX A

TEXT OF ALMOST GOODBYE, GUZZLER (CRESSWELL AND BROWNE 1990)

Other Jets titles you may enjoy

Jessy Runs Away	Rachel Anderson
Two Hoots	Helen Cresswell
Nina's Machines	Peter Firmin
Desperate for a Dog	Rose Impey
Houdini Dog	Rose Impey
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Cowardy Cowardy Cutlass	Robin Kingsland
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Jacko	Pat Thomson
Ging Gang Goolie – It's An Alien!	Bob Wilson

First published by A & C Black (Publishers) Limited 1990

Published in Young Lions 1990
Fifth impression March 1993

Young Lions is an imprint of the Children's Division,
part of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd,
77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB

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Almost Goodbye Guzzler

Helen Cresswell and Judy Brown

Young Lions

Susie Potts and Guzzler Gummidge were best friends.

So were their mothers,

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Susie and Guzzler were in Class 4
at Witherspoon Road Junior School

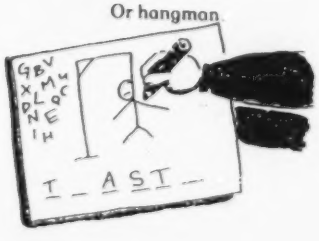
Their teacher was Miss Toasty.
She was very very very very boring

Mrs Potts and Mrs Gummidge went
on about this so much, it was a
wonder Susie and Guzzler weren't
worst enemies

So Susie and Guzzler sat at the back
of the class and did their own thing.

They played noughts and crosses,
mostly.

Or hangman.



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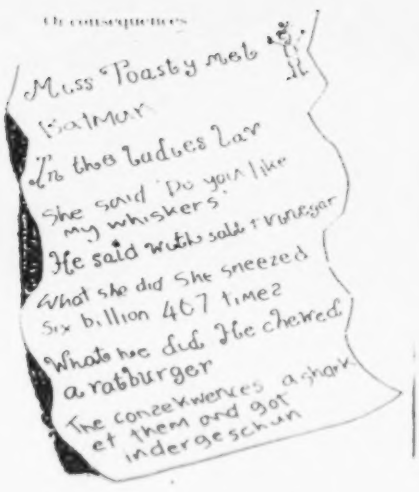
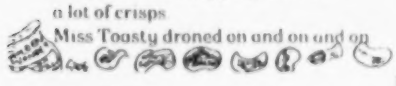
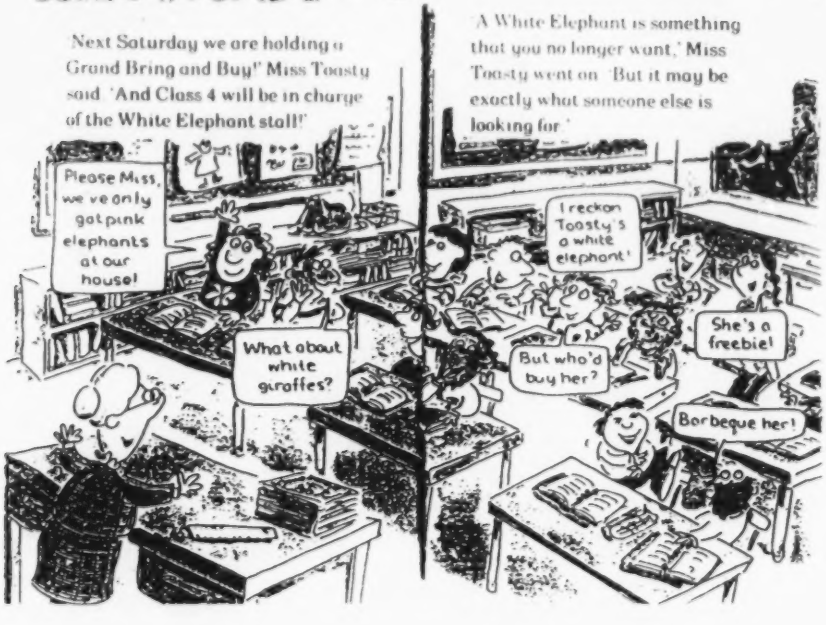

Miss Toasty met Batman
In the ladies bar
She said 'Do you like my whiskers'
He said with salt + vinegar
What she did She sneezed six billion 467 times
What he did He chewed a rabburger
The consequences a short of them and got indergeschun

One day Miss Toasty tapped on her desk with her ruler
The class looked up – even Susie and Guzzler
'I have some very exciting news!' she said
You've joined a space mission to Mars!
There's a National Strike of school kids!
The school's closing down!

They fell about giggling and ate a lot of crisps
Miss Toasty droned on and on and on




'Next Saturday we are holding a Grand Bring and Buy!' Miss Toasty said. 'And Class 4 will be in charge of the White Elephant stall!'
Please Miss, we've only got pink elephants at our house!
What about white giraffes?
'A White Elephant is something that you no longer want,' Miss Toasty went on. 'But it may be exactly what someone else is looking for.'
I reckon Toasty's a white elephant!
She's a freebie!
But who'd buy her?
Barbeque her!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

said
Miss Toasty.
'And then you
can also go round
knocking at doors.
You must be very polite, and you
must work in pairs.'

'Bags Guzzler and me!' yelled Suzy

12

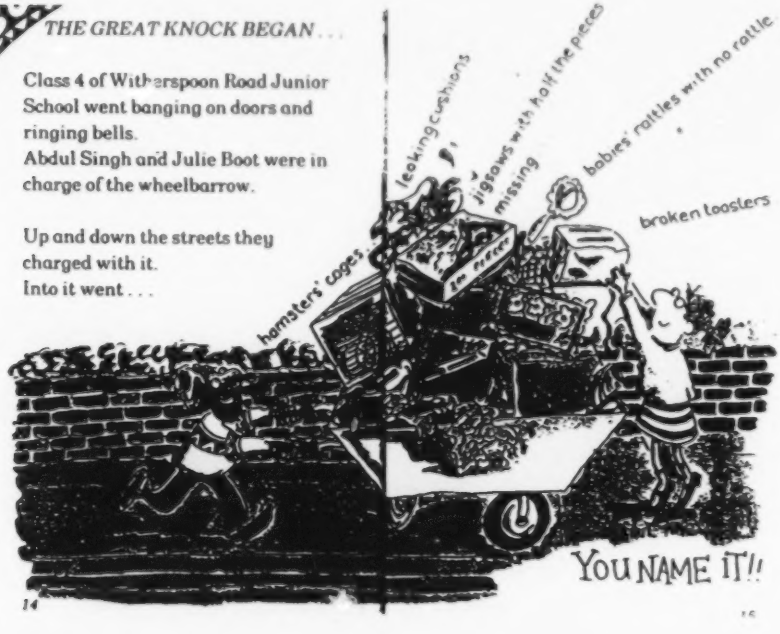
'I think,' said Miss Toasty 'that
some people at the back are
being silly.'

13

THE GREAT KNOCK BEGAN . . .

Class 4 of Witherspoon Road Junior
School went banging on doors and
ringing bells.
Abdul Singh and Julie Boot were in
charge of the wheelbarrow.

Up and down the streets they
charged with it.
Into it went . . .



14

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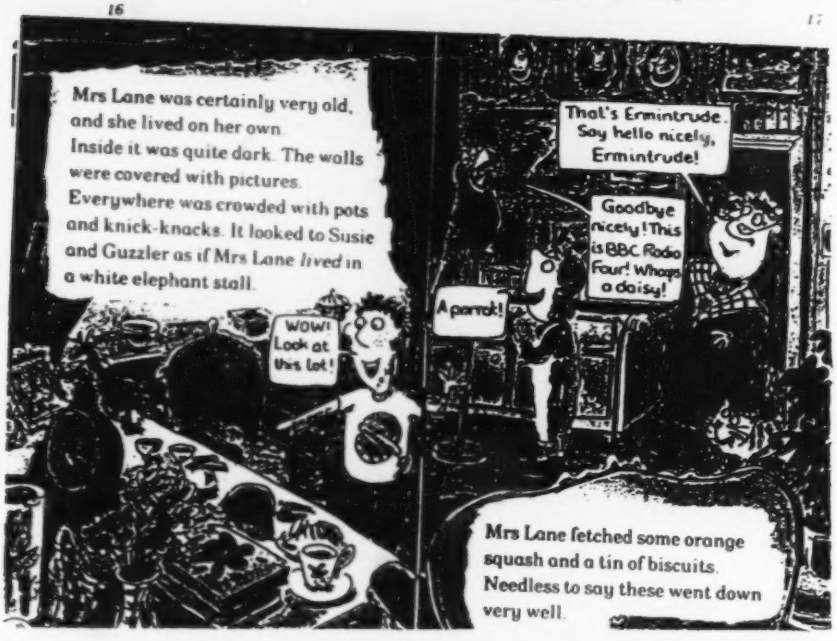
Miss Lonsty was delighted.
You could tell this by the way she clapped her hands.

Susie Potts and Guzzler Gummidge went off on their own. They wanted to collect umpteen white elephants – more than the rest of the class put together.

They decided to concentrate on old people.
'I reckon the older you are, the more white elephants you've got,' said Susie.

(Susie and Guzzler's manners were quite good when they tried.)


Mrs Lane was certainly very old, and she lived on her own.
Inside it was quite dark. The walls were covered with pictures.
Everywhere was crowded with pots and knick-knacks. It looked to Susie and Guzzler as if Mrs Lane *lived* in a white elephant stall.
WOW! Look at this lot!
That's Ermintrude. Say hello nicely, Ermintrude!
Goodbye nicely! This is BBC Radio Four! Whoops a daisy!
A parrot!
Mrs Lane fetched some orange squash and a tin of biscuits. Needless to say these went down very well.

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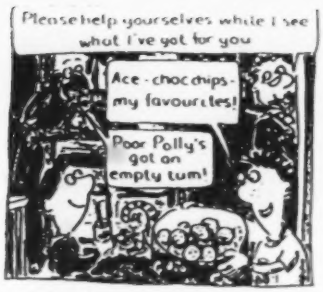
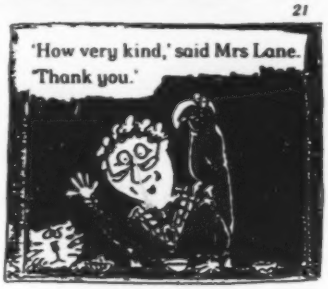


The biscuit tin emptied fast – Guzzler Gummidge wasn't called Guzzler for nothing. Susie fed her biscuits to Ermintrude because she liked to watch the parrot's beak working. It seemed to be on hinges.

'I remember Alfred buying this from an antique shop when we were first married,' Mrs Lane told them. 'I'm afraid it's rather dusty. Everything's dusty. My old hands are rather shaky these days.'

Mrs Lane come back with her white elephant.
Now - what about this? It's very old
Looks like Aladdin's lamp to me
What is it?
I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts!



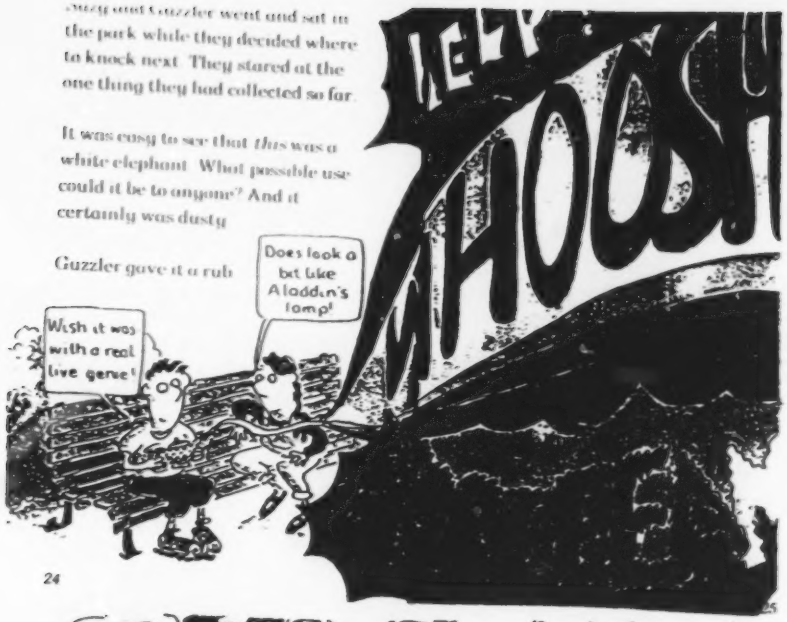
(I told you Susie and Guzzler had good manners. *And* hearts of gold.)

They thanked Mrs Lane, promised to see her next week to do the dusting, and went off with the lamp.

Suzy and Guzzler went and sat in the park while they decided where to knock next. They stared at the one thing they had collected so far.

It was easy to see that *this* was a white elephant. What possible use could it be to anyone? And it certainly was dusty.

Guzzler gave it a rub.



Guzzler's mind was a total blank.
So was Susie's.
They were flabbergasted.
Poleaxed.
GOBSTRUCK.

They gaped up at the genie in his swirl of blue and green smoke.
'I am the genie of the lamp. You have two wishes left!' he said.
Two wishes? Could they both be asleep and dreaming the same dream?

WISHES

You just don't go round expecting to have wishes granted. No one does. Perhaps we should all carry round a card with three wishes, like a donor card. Then we'd be ready for emergencies. As it was, Susie and Guzzler were caught on the hop.

The genie disappeared in a puff of smoke and a roar like a gas jet. Guzzler and Susie blinked. Had they imagined the whole thing?

Guzzler had gone.

His clothes were empty.

At first neither of them could take it in.

Guzzler was exceedingly chuffed to be invisible.

He meant to . . .

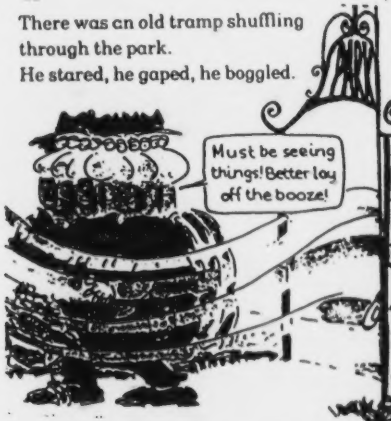
stick his tongue out at Miss Toasty . . .

go through every door that said NO ADMITTANCE . . .

and best of all . . .

Guzzler tore off. He meant to do just that, straight away. Susie went after him.

There was an old tramp shuffling through the park.
He stared, he gaped, he boggled.



He'd seen plenty in his long life on the road, but never anything like this.
Guzzler Gummidge was out of the park and into the street.
After him went Susie Potts at a fast lick.

She was wishing she had her camera with her. No one was ever going to believe this.

'There's one thing,' she thought, 'he can use the last wish to come visible again!'

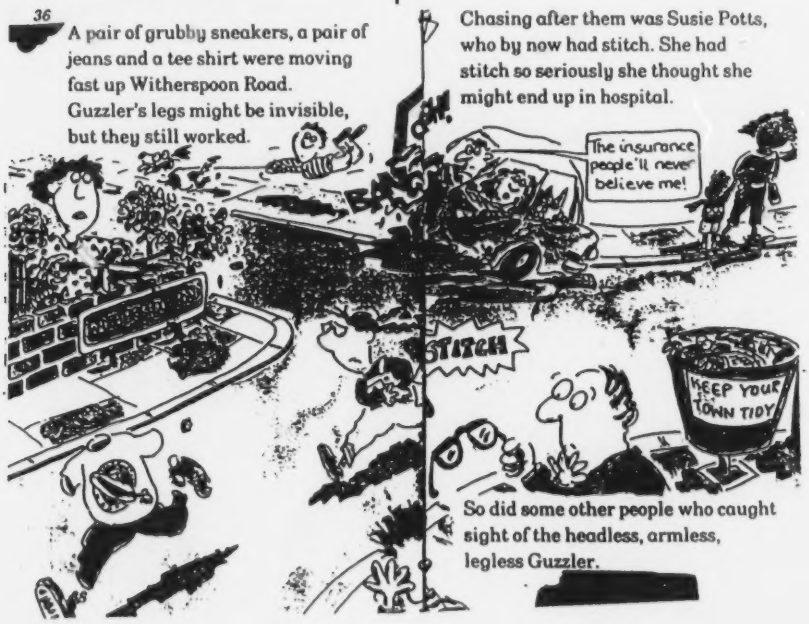
BUT CAN HE ??

The poor old tramp thought he'd better have a sit down after a shock like that. His legs were like jelly.

Moral
Don't Leave Litter lying about and don't Leave magic Lamps (→)
[especially when they give three wishes and you've already used up two]

A pair of grubby sneakers, a pair of jeans and a tee shirt were moving fast up Witherspoon Road. Guzzler's legs might be invisible, but they still worked.

Chasing after them was Susie Potts, who by now had stitch. She had stitch so seriously she thought she might end up in hospital.



So did some other people who caught sight of the headless, armless, legless Guzzler.

Guzzler raced on, hell-bent for the girl's toilets.

His mind was working fast.
He wondered if he really was like a ghost, and could go through things.
He decided to test it out on a lamp post.

Guzzler rubbed the invisible bump on his invisible nose.
He wondered if he needed some invisible sticking plaster.

At last Susie caught up.

'This is terrific,' Guzzler told her.
'Where's old Toasty?'

He certainly didn't.

Guzzler stared with his invisible eyes.

said Susie, who was getting fed up.

That was when the awful truth dawned.

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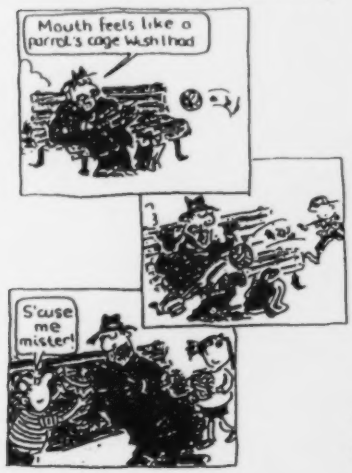
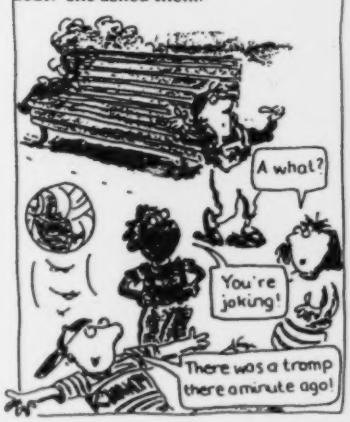
The tramp had no idea what the lamp was for. He just hoped it would be worth a bob or two. He picked it up



44

Susie thought fast. She saw the kids playing football.
'Quick – get behind that tree!' she told Guzzler. She went over to the kids.
'Hey – did you take a lamp off this seat?' she asked them.



Susie and Guzzler raced back to the park like bats out of hell. Everything depended on that lamp still being where they had left it. Otherwise, Guzzler was doomed to a lifetime of being invisible.

Guzzler then made a

GREAT TACTICAL ERROR

he came out from behind the tree. To be fair, he didn't exactly realize what a fearsome spectacle he was.
'A tramp? Where did he go?' he demanded. The kids went into a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Susie and Guzzler were now in a DIRE QUANDARY.

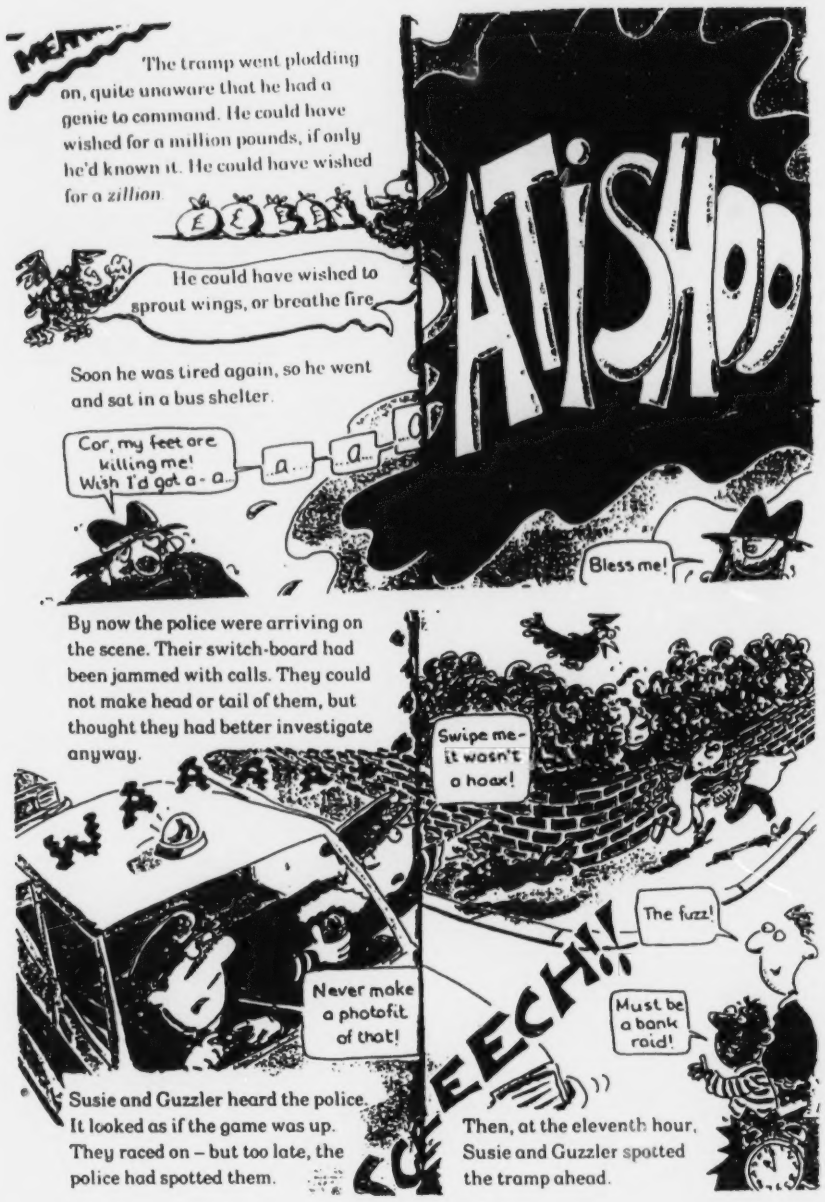
It looked as if a tramp had made off with the lamp – *plus resident genie!*

And there was only one wish left!!!

Meanwhile the panic stricken kids had gone to dial 999.

Susie and Guzzler raced on. Everything now depended on finding that tramp before he made a wish. By now Guzzler was beginning to wish he had taken off his clothes.

At least he'd be totally invisible if he were starkers. He was attracting too much attention for comfort.


The tramp went plodding on, quite unaware that he had a genie to command. He could have wished for a million pounds, if only he'd known it. He could have wished for a *zillion*.
He could have wished to sprout wings, or breathe fire.
Soon he was tired again, so he went and sat in a bus shelter.
Cor, my feet are killing me! Wish I'd got a - a...
...a...
...a...
ATISHOO
Bless me!
By now the police were arriving on the scene. Their switch-board had been jammed with calls. They could not make head or tail of them, but thought they had better investigate anyway.
Swipe me - it wasn't a hoax!
The fuzz!
Never make a photofit of that!
Must be a bank raid!
EECH!!
Susie and Guzzler heard the police. It looked as if the game was up. They raced on – but too late, the police had spotted them.
Then, at the eleventh hour, Susie and Guzzler spotted the tramp ahead.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

He was just going into the bus shelter. They doubled their speed until they were breaking Olympic records
The police jumped out of their cars and went after them, wondering how to arrest a tee shirt, and what they'd charge it with?
What a racket. Not after me, I hope. I know what I wish. I wish . . .
Never seen anything like it, Sarge
Before he could finish his sentence Susie and Guzzler appeared on the scene.
"There it is!" yelled Guzzler, and grabbed the lamp.
Here - what d'you think?
Oi! You!
But the tramp was too late.
He'd missed his chance. No million, no zillion, no wings.
Nothing.
Arrest that tee shirt!!
Your wish is my command
I wish I was visible again please nice genie dear kind lovely genie . . . !
I'm coming off the booze for good!
There was another with a puff of green and blue smoke and the genie had gone and Guzzler was there again!
There was a moment's silence, then everyone was talking at once.
Officers - what is it?
Look, Miss Toosly a white elephant!
I just saw a dirty great big bloke in a turban, if anyone's interested!
PHEW!
I must need a holiday!
I'm off to the Salvation Army to get

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

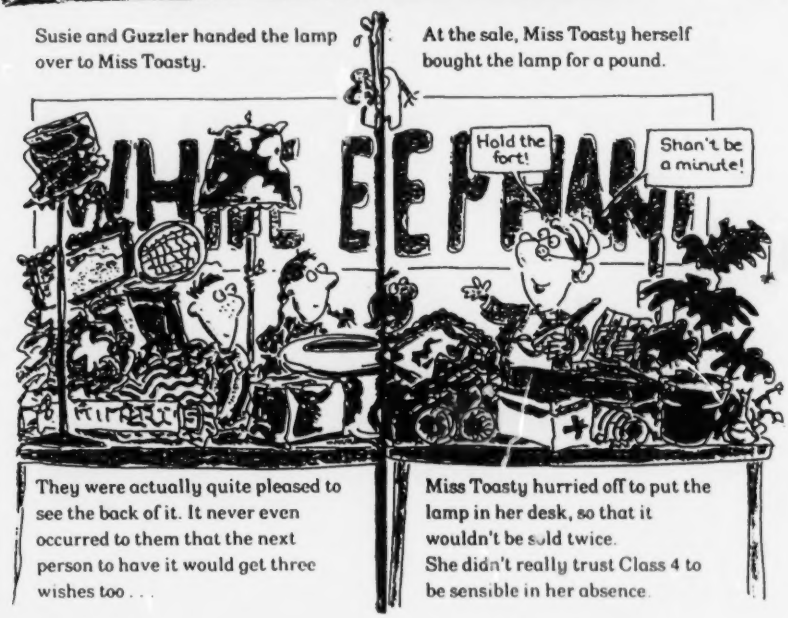
The police had a lot of trouble sorting out what had happened – or rather, *not* sorting it out, because they never did. Policemen can't go round believing in magic lamps and wishes. So in the end they decided to forget the whole thing and let everybody off with a caution.

The Bring and Buy at Witherspoon Road Junior School was a great success.

But the longest queues in town were not at Class 4's White Elephant stall . . .

Susie and Guzzler handed the lamp over to Miss Toasty.

At the sale, Miss Toasty herself bought the lamp for a pound.



They were actually quite pleased to see the back of it. It never even occurred to them that the next person to have it would get three wishes too . . .

Miss Toasty hurried off to put the lamp in her desk, so that it wouldn't be sold twice.
She didn't really trust Class 4 to be sensible in her absence.

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'Oh - it's at times like this' she said,
'I wish I had two pairs of hands' –

Other Jets titles you may enjoy

APPENDIX A1

ALMOST GOODBYE, GUZZLER:

O'Brien: All right now what I'm going to be doing I'm going to be doing two things actually remember I said I was going to be were you in here when I said I was going to be choosing four people to look at specially with their speaking and listening so one of the things I'm going to be doing today is to be looking at the sorts of things you do in a helpful sort of way when we're you know in a big group and when you're in a small group and things like that and I'll be writing down the successful things that you do when we're in a big group so some of that will get recorded and some of it will get written down here. Now.

Student: (almost inaudible) Ms O'Brien there's (inaudible) next door..

Recorder turned off for *message* to be received

O'Brien: Thank you. What I'm going Anthea you do need to be sitting with everybody else. What I'm going to do with Almost Goodbye Guzzler is stop every so often and ask you what you think is going to be happening next. Because one of the things I've (pause) discovered, that I've realised, is that very often with books the things that happen aren't that unusual. They're things that you are quite used to happening. They happen over and over in stories. You might have already discovered that. You think (pause) oh yes I know what's going to happen next because you've already read that sort of thing in a story before. So we're going to see

Student: (inaudible)

O'Brien: Sorry, Alex

Alex (aged 7): What if it's different?

O'Brien: It's great, I think. Don't you think it's great if it's different? If there's something unexpected.

Christy (aged 7, an independent reader and writer): They always show teachers as stupid.

O'Brien: Yes that's true. They often do. The stupid teacher is pretty well out of this story now ... Now, we got up to where people were collecting for the white elephant stall I think isn't that right?

Students: No / yes (hubbub of sound)

Brett: (aged 8, learning to be an independent reader and writer): We got up to the page where Guzzler and Susie go "We were looking for white elephants".

APPENDIX B

ENTRY IN PLANNING JOURNAL

This entry in my planning journal consists of

- brief notes regarding poststructuralist reading positions recommended by Patterson Mellor and O'Neill (1992) as integral to critical analysis of texts shared in the classroom
- a set of statements and questions which I devised as possibilities for initiating critical analysis around the text:

28.7.92 Post-Structuralist readings.
following A Patterson, Mellor and O'Neill (1992)

- Considering what reading positions people take up
- Considering what understandings about the world readers need to have to make sense of a story
- What meanings are available to particular readers? How do particular groups read?
- Challenging dominant readings:
  - What are we invited to think about (ie how are we positioned to read)
  - How else could we see / read this?
- Breaking/interrupting text therefore "defamiliarising"

Students Read Aloud: Jack's book *(Almost goodbye, Guzzler)*

- I want to challenge the dominant reading of the teacher as a person it's OK to ridicule
- We have to agree with this writer that its OK to be rude to /make jokes about a "boring" teacher.
- We laugh at the children if we think it's OK to be rude to a teacher.
- It makes us laugh by ridiculing teacher.
- I used to be a school student so I can read this as some kids getting fun out of a boring classroom.

- Do you notice how as a teacher and a woman I reject the readings of the teacher as a woman who deserves to have kids play up on her?
- What kind of teacher would recommend this to her/his students?
- Who laughs at this book?
- How does it make us laugh?
- Who is really making the jokes about the teacher? The characters in the story or the writer?
- Who is the story for?
  - Teachers ... Why? ... Why not?
  - Students ... Why? ... Why not?
  - Parents ... Why? ... Why not?
- What would teachers like about this?
- What wouldn't teachers like about it?
- What do students like about it?
- What do students not like about it?
- What would parents like/not like about it?

APPENDIX C

CLASSROOM CHART

During the first reading aloud session around *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*, I recorded the questions I asked and a made brief summary of children's responses. At the bottom of the chart I set out a final activity for the session:

Almost Goodbye, Guzzler

1 Who laughs at this book?

students

2 What things in this book make these readers laugh?

consequences game ... (being)ridiculous about Miss Toasty

sending Miss Toasty to Mars

barbecue (given by) Miss Toasty

3 Is it OK to laugh at her because she's boring?

Yes

4 Who is this story for?

- Teachers? ... Why?

  They might think it is funny enough to read to their class.

- Teachers? ... Why not?

  Teachers and adults wouldn't laugh at it. It makes fun of adults.

- Students? ... Why?

  It's for kids. It's not true

  It's made-up things that make kids laugh.

- Students? ... Why not? *(no answers)*

Draw either something in the story students laugh at or something teachers would not like.

APPENDIX D

STUDENTS' WRITING AND DRAWING

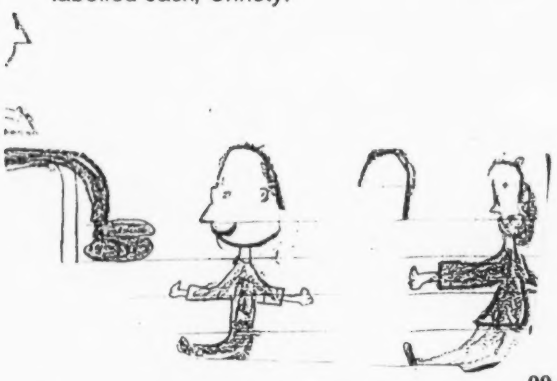
The third of the materials is the writing and drawing produced by students in response to the task recorded on the chart shown above: *Draw either something in the story students laugh at or something teachers would not like:*

Stacey 6
S (tudents) love (the) jokes
T(eacher) I don't love (the) jokes
Drawings:
Children laughing; speech bubbles: *ahhhhhhh*
Teacher laughing: label: *Miss T*
Miss Toasty is boring in the story. Drawing: Stick figure at blackboard

Alex 5

Rhianna 7

Drawing: Brightly coloured: teacher sitting chair reading aloud to children sitting on floor, labelled *Jack, Christy.*



Brett 8

Drawings:

Black figure sitting behind desk; speech bubble: *coolt*

Black figure sitting behind desk; speech bubble: *cookt*

Christy 8

Drawing: Three female figures, brightly coloured, throwing a paper plane speech bubbles: *Boy, this book is funny and This book is great!*

Steven 6

They are playing (consequences)

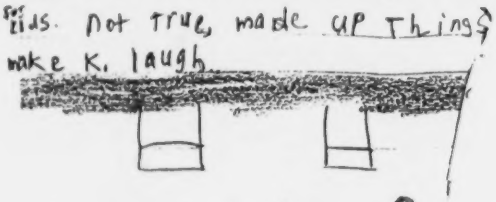
Drawing: Black and white: Two children sitting at a desk

Louisa 7

Drawing of piece of paper; labels: *Consequences game; it is fun; it is a fun game*

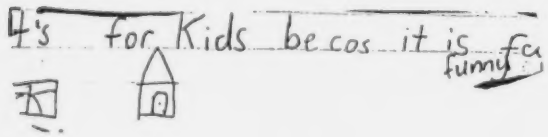
Nicole 7

It's for kids, Not true, made up things that make k(ids) laugh. Drawing: Brightly coloured: teacher sits on chair reading a book, students stand in front of her



Tan 6

It's for kids because it's funny

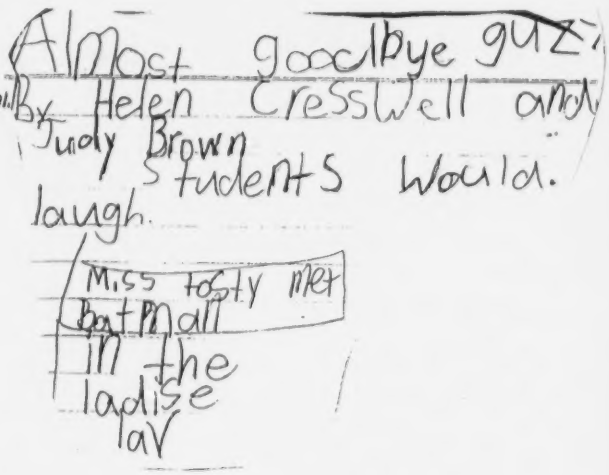


Jack 7

Almost goodbye guzzler by Helen Cresswell and Judy Brown

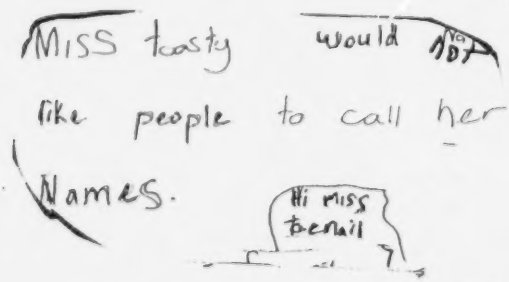
Students would laugh

Miss Toasty met Bat man in the ladies lav.



Anthea 7

Miss Toasty would not like people to call her names. Drawing: black and white: heads with speech bubble: *Hi Miss Toenail*



John 6

Drawing black and brown: Two students in their chairs, teacher at desk, all with arms in air.

Kayla 7

Drawing: Coloured. Teacher on chair facing four students.

Maree 5

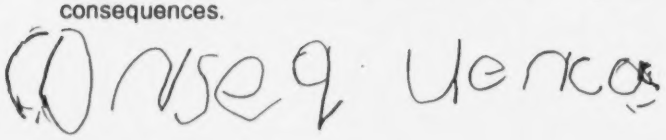
Drawing of a number of figures; "pretend" writing around the edge.

James 7

Drawing: Black and white: Student at table, speech bubble: *Cook, Miss Toasty*

Lauren 6

Consequences. Drawing of paper used in game of consequences.



APPENDIX E

REFLECTION

Following first reading aloud of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler* and critical discussion recorded on classroom chart (see above) I made the following notes:

Almost goodbye, Guzzler

Helen Cresswell and

Judy Brown

London: Young Lions 1990.

[Reflection on discussion on questions 3 pages earlier (ie. questions and activities setting up critical analysis of *Almost goodbye, Guzzler*)]

- Resistance to interrupted reading aloud
- Resistance to written task ... was the discussion ~~enough~~ sufficient.
- There was acknowledgment that it was mean to teachers ... but division on whether t(eachers) w(oul)d find it funny.

Interrupting the Text

p. 23 .....What's going to happen?

p. 28 ..... What's he going to wish?

p. 36 ..... What's the tramp going to do?

p. 43 ..... What will they do next?

APPENDIX F.

TRANSCRIPT

The following material is a transcript of the audio recording made when I read *Almost goodbye, Guzzler aloud* for the second time. It is not a record of the entire session around the text because the tape got caught up in the recorder.

1 O'Brien: All right now what I'm going to be doing I'm going to be doing two things actually remember I said I was going to be were you in here when I said I was going to be choosing four people to look at specially with their speaking and listening so one of the things I'm going to be doing today is to be looking at the sorts of things you do in a helpful sort of way when we're you know in a big group and when you're in a small group and things like that and I'll be writing down the successful things that you do when we're in a big group so some of that will get recorded and some of it will get written down here. Now.

2. Student: (almost inaudible) Ms O'Brien there's (inaudible) next door..

3. Recorder turned off for message to be received

4. O'Brien: Thank you. What I'm going Rhianna you do need to be sitting with everybody else. What I'm going to do with *Almost Goodbye Guzzler* is stop every so often and ask you what you think is going to be happening next. Because one of the things I've (pause) discovered, that I've realised, is that very often with books the things that happen aren't that unusual. They're things that you are quite used to happening. They happen over and over in stories. You might have already discovered that. You think (pause) oh yes I know what's going to happen next because you've already read that sort of thing in a story before. So we're going to see

5. Student: (inaudible)

6. O'Brien: Sorry, Louise

7. Louise: What if its different?

8. O'Brien: It's great, I think. Don't you think it's great if it's different? If there's something unexpected.

9. Christy: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* They always show teachers as stupid.

10. O'Brien: Yes that's true. They often do. The stupid teacher is pretty well out of this story now ... Now, we got up to where people were collecting for the white elephant stall I think isn't that right?

11. Students: No / yes (hubbub of sound)

12. Brett: We got up to the page where Guzzler and Susie go "We were looking for white elephants".

13. O'Brien: (Showing page to class) That page was the last one I read? Perhaps the next one? You name it. OK?

14. Students: That one

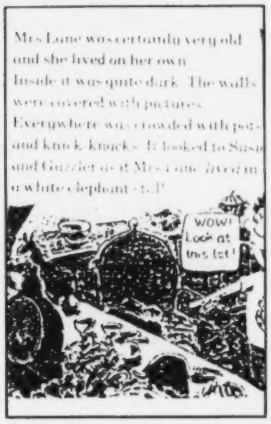
15. O'Brien: OK? Right. OK.

16. Students (still some controversy)

17. O'Brien (begins reading)

18. Student: You've read that page...

19. O'Brien: OK. I'll skip over to the next one.(Reads for a line or two) Now Steven one of the things I write down as well as the successful things you do are the unsuccessful things you do. Talking to another person when it's big group listening time is an unsuccessful thing. So if you think you are going to talk to John you might need to move fairly close so I can write down "eye contact, faces front, pays attention" those are the things I'm looking for. I'll be writing those sorts of things down. (Continues reading)


Mrs Lane was certainly very old
and she lived on her own.
Inside it was quite dark. The walls
were covered with pictures.
Everywhere was crowded with pots
and knick-knacks. It looked to Susie
and Guzzler as if Mrs Lane lived in
a white elephant - itself!
WOW! Look at this lot!

20. Students: What are nick nacks?
21. O'Brien: Nick knacks are ...
22. Jack: (a*ged 7; a confident, competent reader and writer*) Little things that you don't need any more
23. O'Brien Yeah little things. Not necessarily things that you don't need any more. Things that are around the place.
24. Students: (hubbub of sound)
25. Steven: (*aged 6 gaining confidence as reader and writer*) Nik nax are sometimes when you have snacks
26. O'Brien: That is a food. Someone made that up. Nik nax I think they say don't they.
27. Student: Yeah
28. O'Brien: Yeah those are those little biscuits and I guess they thought it was a catchy name for food. Lainie.
29. Lainie: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* In some stories they've got dark walls and things and they've got spare parts and they've got old ladies living by themselves
30. O'Brien: So that's something you recognise as having old people living by themselves and **the darkness**. Hmmm Umm (continues reading aloud)
31. Student: Laughter (continues reading aloud)
32. O'Brien: (Breaks off reading narrative prose to read the speech bubbles which are used on nearly every page to carry and extend action and characterisation) Now here are some of the conversations. (reads conversations to accompaniment of considerable merriment)

That's Ermintrude
Say hello nicely, Ermintrude!
Goodbye nicely! This is BBC Radio Four! Whoops a daisy!
Mrs Lane fetched some orange squash and a tin of biscuits

33. Student: (inaudible comment)
34. Another student: That's later
35. O'Brien: That's later on. (continues reading aloud)
36. Steven: Why does he say what's for sweets?
37. Student: What's for sweets, mum
38. O'Brien: Parrots usually copy what people say. We haven't heard anyone say what's for sweets yet.
39. Jack: She may have the radio on. The parrot's listening to it so he goes "This is BBC radio 4".
40. O'Brien: Yeah.(much laughter) Now one of the things when you've got these books with all of that speech is to work out which bit comes first. Alex.
41. Student: (inaudible)
42. O'Brien: Alex, no need for tales. OK? I think it would be a good idea if you were much closer to the front, Alex. Down the front, please. Sit near me.
43. Steven: (calling out) And Alex has to, too.
44. Jack: Read what the parrot's saying now.
45. O'Brien: OK (continues reading aloud, to accompaniment of much laughter). That's Guzzler. Remember Guzzler?
46. Students: Yeah
47. O'Brien: He's always hungry so you get all this talk about food from Guzzler. (continues reading aloud) (pause while she waves an admonitory finger) In her hand there is (pauses significantly) .. the ...white elephant /

white elephant
Now what about this? It's very old
Looks like Aladdin's lamp to me
What is it?
I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts!

48. /Students: The white elephant (inaudible comments about the picture)
49. Jack: The lamp (in similar significant tones) It's the lamp.
50. O'Brien: (reads)
51. Jack: There's a picture of it on the front cover
52. O'Brien: What is it? .
53. Jack: The title page:
54. O'Brien: It looks like Aladdin's lamp to me.

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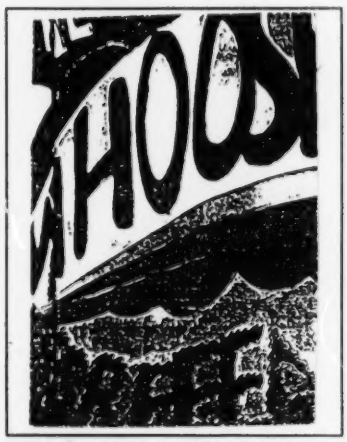
55. Brett: (*aged 7, gaining confidence as a reader and writer*) Let me have a look
56. O'Brien: And here's the cocky (continues reading aloud to the accompaniment of laughter)
57. Jack: (Gurgles with delight) (inaudible) Ms O'Brien
58. O'Brien: Right here's my very first question to you.
59. Jack: (persisting) ... the title page

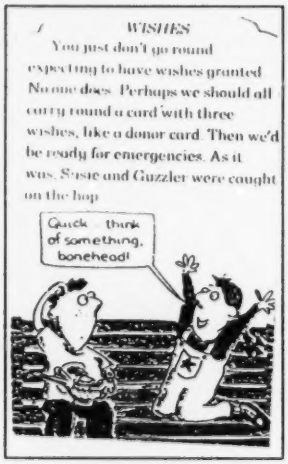
60. O'Brien: No it's not. I'm going to read (recorder turned off at this point) ... the question. It's really important to have the question ...
61. Jack: (still persisting) ... the title page, Ms O'Brien
62. O'Brien: The title page, Jack? Oh the title page.
63. Jack: It's got THE LAMP (voice of gloomy significance)
64. O'Brien: The lamp. And that explains that voice you're using too. (hubbub of voices trying out THE LAMP)
65. O'Brien: Here's Mrs Lane talking. (reads) Now that's the picture and here is /
66. /Jack: (inaudible) down there
67. O'Brien: /let's try. cocky first. (reads to accompaniment of raucous laughter). Now here are the two children (reads) and Guzzler (reads)
68. Jack: Ms O'Brien
69. O'Brien: (to messenger returning to room) Success?
70. Student: We need a video
71. O'Brien: What do you mean you need a video? You need the screen? /
72. /Students: (hubbub, offering explanations, help)
73. O'Brien: Excuse me. I don't know what you mean by a video (tape recorder turned off to deal with this interruption)
74. O'Brien: (resumes reading)
75. Student; (boy, calling out) It's got the lamp on there
76. O'Brien: Yes, exactly. and can you see /
77. /Students: (general hubbub, trying out THE LAMP)/
78. /Student: It's a magic lamp
79. Jack: THE LAMP
80. O'Brien: (persisting) And can you also see how whoever did the illustrations has put those two little hearts there. Right, here's the question. I want you to think about /
81. /Jack: Why?
82. O'Brien: Why hearts? Because of having hearts of gold. They had **hearts** of gold. And so there are the hearts of gold.
83. Jack: THE LAMP (some background hubbub, unidentifiable)
84. O'Brien: OK What is going to happen. Let's have thinking, hands up /
85. /Student: (largely inaudible about biscuits)
86. O'Brien: OK I'm sorry can you sit back a bit please your voice is going to come through much too loud I think. /
87. Students: (indistinguishable comments)
88. O'Brien: Speak nice and loudly and clearly when you tell m e what you think. What's going to happen? A lamp.....A lamp, an old lamp. Think about the things /
89. /Student: A genie
90. Jack: (inaudible) Ms O'Brien
91. /O'Brien: Excuse me. Think about the things you already know about stories with lamps in them and see
92. Student: That's the thing that probably made the magic /
93. Steven: (laughing inaudible comment)
94. /Student: A genius /
95. /O'Brien: OK People who have their hands up will the ones who get asked first of course. Anthea.
96. Anthea: *(aged 7, an independent reader and writer)* It's going to become magic and a genie's going to come out and grant them wishes /

97. /Student: Yeah (quietly)
98. O'Brien: Aha!
99. Steven: Yeah
100. O'Brien: Steven what do you say.
101. Steven: I was about to say what Anthea said.
102. O'Brien: Well can you say it again in your own words.
103. Jack:(inaudible calling out)
104. O'Brien: That's twice you've called out. Hands should be up.
105. O'Brien: Steven can you say it again in your own words please.
106. Steven: Well, they're gunna get their own ?missions and ? roy and ? because ? going to say it
107. O'Brien: What, the lamp will say something to them?
108. Steven: Yeah
109. O'Brien: Do you have any idea about how they'll find out it's magic?
110. Steven: No (speculative muttering from group)
111. O'Brien: Well answered Steven. OK Lainie?
112. Lainie: I reckon like Anthea's and Steven's. The genie's going to come out and he's going to say Thank goodness I've got out and he' starts stretching himself ... And he asks You've got three wishes. And then the one who likes eating all the time says **I'll have bickies please**.
113. O'Brien: (Affirmative, smiling) Hm OK Let's hear from someone else. Jessie.
114. Jessie: (*aged 6, gaining confidence as a reader and writer)* She's got a lamp in her hand and she (inaudible)
115. O'Brien: OK What a lot of predictions. You know a lot about what happens in a story when a lamp comes in, don't you? Rhianna
116. Student: ? my mummy wouldn't ...
117. O'Brien: Rhianna
118. Rhianna: The lamp's magic and the genie's going to come out and he's going to give them two wishes each.
119. O'Brien: Two each. So you've changed it a bit. Who else? Who said three wishes? Anyone say three wishes?
120. O'Brien: (Looks around at hands) Hm. Mark what's your comment?
121. Mark: (a*ged 7, a competent reader and gaining confidence as a writer*) Um
122. O'Brien: Mark, I'm going to have to interrupt. Steven, you'll have to move forward. You'll have to leave those things alone. John. You'll have to sit over there. You'll need to leave alone whatever you're playing with. (pause while directions are followed) Right, sorry Mark. Go on
123. Mark: (inaudible) and the lamp says um it says THE LAMP and then the genie pops out and then it says OO I got a big fright I saw you.
124. O'Brien: Do you know what? It's almost as if the story has been written already, you people know so much about what's going to happen.
125. Christy: It's written in our head
126. O'Brien: It's written in your head because you've heard it and read it already. /
127. /Students: (hubbub of talk)
128. O'Brien: Listen. Can I ask you something different?
129. Student: (inaudible comment)
130. O'Brien: I'm sure it was. Listen. I said to you what's going to happen. Could you imagine if something a little bit different happened to do with a lamp? Just try and change it. Don't stick to what normally happens. Just see if you can change it and give a prediction about what's going to happen, but make it different. Louise.
131. Louise: (inaudible suggestion)
132. O'Brien: Hm. Right so that's a bit different from what the others have said. Jack what's your idea? Something **different**.
133. Jack: What will happen is they'll go to the park and they'll accidentally rub it and the genie will come out and grant them two and grant one and grant Guzzler two wishes and Guzzler will come invisible.
134. O'Brien: Hm. You've told jusT what actually happens in the book, haven't you? I was asking people if they can imagine something different from a genie and rubbing /

135. /Student: That was what I was trying to do
136. O'Brien: Louise came up with not the children rubbing it but someone else rubbing it so that was a difference. Christy what do you think?
137. Christy: (inaudible suggestion)
138. O'Brien: Aha! So that's completely different. You've got right away from a genie haven't you? So it's as if you think the writer might make you think it's a genie then change it.
139. Student: The one that said a (inaudible) might have (inaudible)
140. O'Brien: Well, that's possible too. Jane.
141. Jane: (*aged 6, gaining independence as a reader and writer*) Someone takes it Guzzler takes it to the shopping centre and the genie doesn't come out.
142. O'Brien: Hm. Oh I see. So it fails. They think it's magic but it turns out not to be magic. We're going to have to leave it because I I'm dying to hear what you've /
143. /Students: (protests)
144. /O'Brien: got to say but I just can't (tones of mock anguish). Let's find out what Helen Cresswell and Judy Browne decided to have happen .anyway. (continues reading)
145. Student: Ahhh (soft)
146. O'Brien: Yeah .Ahh. And it's /
147. /Students: Ahhh (soft)
148. /Anthea: You can see something come out of the thingy.
149. O'Brien: Hmmm. Is that a sort of signal to you that the writer might have something in mind? /



150. /Students: Ye-e-e-s /
151. /Student: An elephant might come out
152. O'Brien: (continues reading aloud) I wish I wish
153. Jack: That gives it a wish when it says a wish.
154. O'Brien: That's exactly right. I had to read it about three times to work out what was happening. First you've got to read what Susie says. She says (reads speech bubble aloud)
And Guzzler says (reads speech bubble aloud) And then (reads speech bubble aloud)/
155. /Jack: Whoosh (shouting, copying text)
156. Assorted students: *Scream! Help!* (reading along with the speech bubbles)
157. O'Brien: (reads aloud) Oh wait a minute (reads in very dramatic tones) And notice how they've decided to put really fancy writing about around what the genie says. (continues)/


WISHES
You just don't go round expecting to have wishes granted. No one does. Perhaps we should all carry round a card with three wishes, like a donor card. Then we'd be ready for emergencies. As it was, Susie and Guzzler were caught on the hop.
Quick - think of something, bonehead!

158. /Students: (sounds of delicious enjoyment)
159. O'Brien: Notice how they've already used up one wish (continues)
160. Student: (barely audible question about a feature of the text)
161. O'Brien: Can you see? Can you see the balloons? Nothing in them, no little dots, nothing. No ideas at all. Next chapter is (continues)
162. Anthea: There's nothing in because their minds are blank.
163. O'Brien: Their minds are blank because they were so because /
164. /Jack: It must be chapter ? (chapters aren't numbered)
165. /O'Brien: Page 28. OK (continues)/
166. /Students: (soft sounds)
167. O'Brien: (continues) There's Susie saying (continues) Question! What is he going to wish?

MATERIALS AROUND *BEWARE OF THE AUNTS* THOMSON P LONDON: MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS, 199[illegible]

APPENDIX G

TEXT OF *BEWARE OF THE AUNTS* THOMSON (1991)

A Vanessa Hamilton Book
Text © 1991 by Pat Thomson
Illustrations © 1991 by Emma Chichester Clark
All rights reserved.
First published 1991 by
MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS
A division of Macmillan Publishers Limited
London and Basingstoke
Associated companies throughout the world

A CIP catalogue record for this book is
available from the British Library
ISBN 0-333-52524-8
Printed in Hong Kong

PAT THOMSON

Illustrated by

EMMA CHICHESTER CLARK

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

My family is not very big. I have a little sister and a big brother. I have a mother, a father, a cat, a dog and a goldfish.

Mum and Dad both come from big families. I have two grandmothers and one grandfather. I don't mind them at all. But I'll tell you what the big problem is. My mother has lots of sisters. My father has even more sisters.

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It's all very well having lots of aunts, but there's only one time of the year when they are utterly indispensable . . . at least as far as the heroine of this story is concerned.

Pat Thomson and Emma Chichester Clark gently poke fun at the foibles of nine aunts, ranging from Aunt Anne who is far too fond of hugging and kissing to Aunt Charlotte who is downright menacing. The results of this delightful collaboration will amuse every member of the family, including *most* aunts.

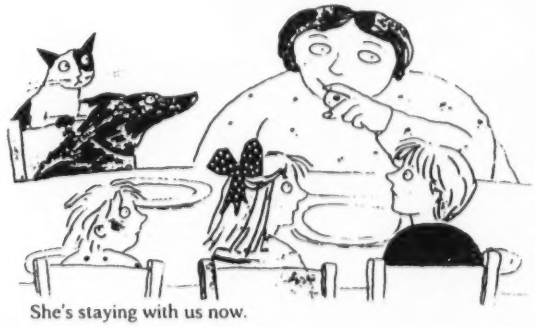
That means I have too many aunts.

Aunt Anne is far too fond of kissing. Dad goes out when she comes round, but she always kisses Mum. She hugs and kisses my big brother. She kisses me and says, "How you've grown!" My poor little sister is showered with kisses.

She even kisses the cat.

Auntie Betty eats a lot. She once ate ten ice creams. She never takes just one sandwich.

She always helps herself to the largest slice of cake. She even took the last biscuit on the plate.

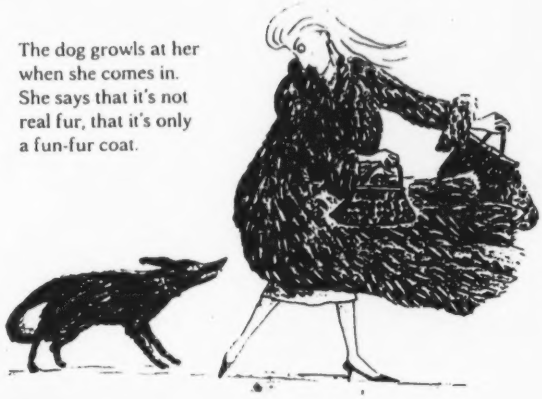


She's staying with us now.

The dog's biscuits are missing.

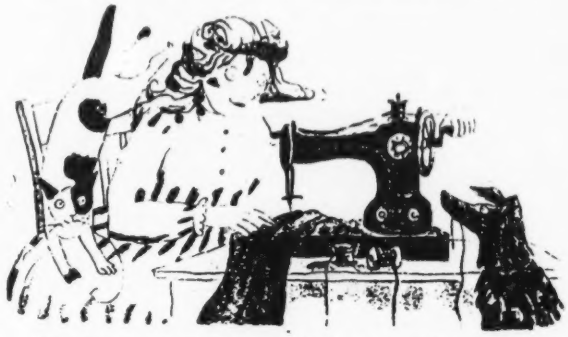
Aunt Elizabeth must be very rich. She wears a fur coat.

The dog growls at her when she comes in. She says that it's not real fur, that it's only a fun-fur coat.



But she was cross when we had some fun with it in the hall.

Auntie Zara likes sewing. She makes all her own clothes.



Dad says you can tell she does. I think she must like very bright colours. She once made a dress out of a bedspread. She kept falling over the fringe.

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I'm afraid she sometimes makes *us* things.

My Aunt Mary is very kind. The only thing wrong with her is my cousin, Rodney. Rodney wins medals for ballroom dancing.

He is always clean and neat. He likes being with grown-ups and handing round tea on the lawn.

He slipped and fell in the garden pond once.

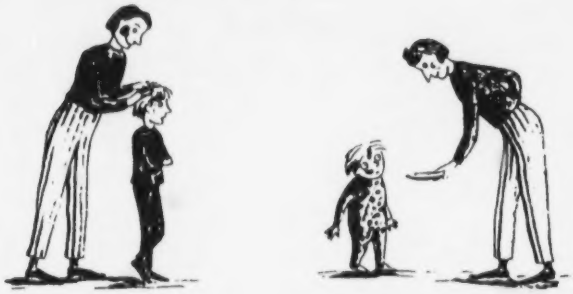
Aunt Jean is really fussy about her house. We hate going there.

We have to wash our hands all the time. Her kitchen is like a hospital. Her floor is like a skating rink.

No children are allowed in her best room.

We haven't been to stay since our dog had a fight with her tablecloth.

Aunt Susan always forgets her glasses.



"Hello, little poppet," she says to my big brother.
She once put a saucer of milk on the floor for my little sister, tried to feed the television with fish food, and thought the cat was her scarf.

That was the day she went out wearing her best coat and the lampshade from the hall.

I'm almost sure Aunt Charlotte is a witch.

I've seen her wearing a big, black cloak. Her nails are long and red. Her black cat scratched me once.

She lives in a cottage down a lane with strange herbs hanging from the kitchen beams.

There's a frog in her garden.
I wonder who it really is?

Aunt Jane loves new hats – fur ones in the winter,

flowery ones in the summer. We are not allowed to laugh,

but the one with a parrot on top makes her look like a pirate.
Dad says all she needs is a wooden leg!

At Christmas, of course, they all come and visit us. They talk and talk. The house is full of aunts. There are aunts in the kitchen, aunts in the bathroom, aunts in the bedrooms. Dad says we should put down aunt powder. It's really awful. But on the other hand . . .

you can't have too many aunts
at Christmas!

APPENDIX H

PLANNING NOTES

BEWARE OF THE AUNTS **PAT THOMSON LONDON: MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 1991**

1. PLANNING NOTES

I haven't opened this. I'm exploring the book too.

Disrupt text before reading aloud. Use the blurb. Talk → chart:

- From the blurb: "one time of the year when they are utterly indispensable": when will this be? Predict when this will be and why CHART for answers.
- Use what you know about writers write about aunts to predict the sorts of aunts that Pat Thomson will "poke fun at". Draw and label 4 aunts Pat Thomson will "poke fun at" in this book. Now draw and label 4 aunts that she won't put in this book.

Discussion after reading:

- Did Pat Thomson surprise you in the way she wrote about aunts? In what ways?
- You are an aunt ... what do you think about the way Pat Thomson writes about you?
- You are a girl ... what do you like / not like about the way Pat Thomson writes about you?
- You are a —... what do you like / not like about the way Pat Thomson writes about you?

* "All stories are already written".

* Stereotyped versions of female characters.

* Reading positions

APPENDIX I

TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of conversation conducted on Tuesday following disruption of text on previous Thursday.

PAT THOMSON

1. O'Brien: I'm going to ask questions just what people remember from the other day and what you thought I was getting you to do. First of all the title of the book is *Beware of the aunts* by a woman called

2. Student: Thomson

3. O'Brien: Thomson Yes and I'm just going to just so that I've got a record it's published by Macmillan Children's Books. It was published in 1991 which was last year. OK Now before when I showed you the book before I started reading the story to you what did I ask what were we talking about what did I get you to talk about?

4. Anthea: What sort of aunts will be in the story.

5. O'Brien: Hm Hm. That's one of the things I asked you to do. Jane?

6. Jane: ... (inaudible) she put in the story

7. O'Brien: OK You'll need to leave the group now You've had a warning about listening.. That's talking at the same time as other people. That's not on. *(Tape turned over)* .

Hubbub of noise...and some complaint ... Student: gets muddles up

8. O'Brien: Yes, I know, don't worry. Floor please quick. Yes, I know it's a nuisance. We'll have to get Mrs Murray to put some glue on it. Aquadhere will do. You'll get over it. You'll be better soon (*in reply to some mostly inaudible complaint from Anthea*) Everyone looking this way. No it's much too soon for lunch orders. (*in reply to some request*) need to go back to what I was saying before because it was it didn't record. First of all let's quickly I hope it is Let's quickly have a Who's going to read the title First of all let's quickly just read the title out. Who's going to read the title out? Anthea?

9. Anthea: Beware of the aunts!

10. O'Brien: The writer's name? Mark?

11. Mark: Pat Pat

12. O'Brien: Thomson that's pronounced. (*sotto voce muttering*) It was published by Macmillan Children's Books and the year was 1991. I'd like to remind you that I need the papers on the floor. Well done to all the people who did remember.

13. Steven: I haven't touched mine

14. O'Brien: Anthea, I asked you a moment ago what were the things I asked you to do that were talking about on Thursday *(when video was made)*. Anthea. you were the first one to say.

15. Anthea: You got us to draw and write about what sort of aunts we think are going to be in the book.

16. O'Brien: OK. And what was the other thing I asked you to write and draw. Troy?

17. Troy: What were the aunts who were going to (indistinct)

18. O'Brien: Right. The aunts who were going to be in there. Yep. And what's the other thing, Jane?

19. Jane: The aunts that weren't going to be in the book.

20. O'Brien: OK. Now I also asked you to talk about something else. Remember I read you from the back and I asked you to talk about um (*looks at back of book*). It says "there's only one time of the year when they are utterly indispensable." Can you remember what I asked you to predict or say for that? Brett, can you remember?

It's all very well having lots of aunts, but there's only one time of the year when they are utterly indispensable . . . at least as far as the heroine of this story is concerned.

Pat Thomson and Emma Chichester Clark gently poke fun at the foibles of nine aunts, ranging from Aunt Anne who is far too fond of hugging and kissing to Aunt Charlotte who is downright menacing. The results of this delightful collaboration will amuse every member of the family, including *most* aunts.

21. Brett (aged 8, gaining confidence as a reader and writer): It means you can't do without them.

22. O'Brien: Beautiful remembering. Can you remember what some of the things you said? When did you say you can't do without aunts? What did you think Pat Thomson would put in the book? Rhianna?

23. Rhianna: (pause) Um

24. O'Brien: Oh, you've found it up there! (*Rhianna has fond the list made on the chart at the previous session)*

25. Rhianna: *(reads aloud the list)*

26. O'Brien: And most people seemed to think these would be times when the aunts would be giving you presents. Kyle thought of a time when your aunt might be able to help you. She might be a friend when you were playing in the snow. Is that right Kyle?

27. Rhianna: That was Troy!

28. O'Brien: I thought that was Kyle.

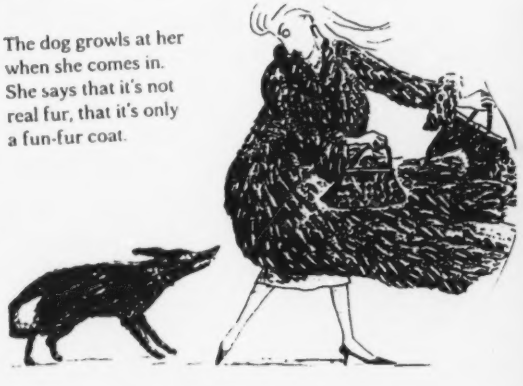
29. Rhianna: No, it was Troy.

30. O'Brien: OK. everybody. What were the things we discovered once we started reading the book? What are the aunts like in this book? How does Pat Thomson make out these aunts to be? What does she make them to be like? Jane?

31. Jane: Mad, fat, good, bad

32. O'Brien: Well, have you got to all of those or are you thinking of what you wrote that Pat Thomson (indistinct)? OK. Can you remember any of the aunts that you read, that I read you about the other day? Alex? You can remember one?

33. Ben: (8, gaining confidence as reader and writer, after very shaky start) The last or the mean one the fur coat.



The dog growls at her when she comes in. She says that it's not real fur, that it's only a fun-fur coat.

34. O'Brien: OK. What was mean about her?

35. Ben: Well, she, she she was rich and the dog growled at her and she (indistinct)

36. O'Brien: OK Can you remember to talk loudly so things come out on the tape player.

37. ?: The one that loved Anthea

38. O'Brien: OK. What else can you remember so far. What other aunts does Pat Thomson put in the story so far? Anthea?

Auntie Betty eats a lot. She once ate ten ice creams. She never takes just one sandwich.

39. Anthea: A really, really fat one that can't stop eating. All the left overs of the food. She's always eating the dog's food.

40. O'Brien: OK. So you remember that one very clearly, don't you? What did Pat Thomson seem to be saying about her in the story? (*Pause from students.*) Any ideas about that? That's hard. That's a different sort of question. Anthea, what do you think?

41. Anthea: She's really bad and nobody really likes her because she eats the sandwiches and no one gets anything to eat

42. O'Brien: Hmmm. Remember to talk up really loudly because I hope that will come out very clearly. OK. What about any other aunts who are in the story that we haven't remembered reminded people about? Mark?

43. Mark: Oh, the lady who loves sewing.

44. O'Brien: Hm Hm. OK. And what did Pat Thomson seem to be saying about the one who loved sewing? Alex?

45. Stacey: (just 7, a confident reader and writer). (inaudible)

46. O'Brien: Uhuh. Anyone else? Rhianna?

47. Rhianna: She likes making her own clothes.

Dad says you can tell she does. I think she must like very bright colours. She once made a dress out of a bedspread. She kept falling over the fringe.

48. O'Brien: OK. And is this a successful thing that she does. Or is Pat Thomson or is Pat Thomson making that out to be a good thing or a bad thing.

49. A few voices: A good thing

50. O'Brien: In what way? In what way?

51. Anthea: It's a good thing that she's recycling things like the bedspread.

52. O'Brien: Is that what Pat Thomson's saying or what you're saying, Anthea?

53. Anthea: It's what I'm saying. She once made something out of a bedspread and she must have had a hole right in the middle of it which was big enough for her head so she must have made a dress out of it.

54. O'Brien: OK fine. You're saying it is a good thing. Do you think Pat Thomson is saying it's a good thing or a bad thing?

55. Voices: Good thing

56. Anthea: It's good that she's recycling.

57. O'Brien: OK. What about this other comment here. (Reading) "I'm afraid she sometimes makes us things". Is that a good thing or a bad thing about that aunt?

58. Voices: Good!

59. O'Brien: Have a good look at the picture.

60. Rhianna: Bad!

61. O'Brien: What makes you say that, Rhianna?

62. Rhianna: Because the sleeves are too long and they don't look right on them.

63. O'Brien: Anyone else agree with Rhianna?

64. Voices: No, (and a hubbub, indecipherable)

65. O'Brien: Just a minute. Excuse me. We need one at a time. Jane would you say that again?

66. Jane: The sleeve is too long for the Dad's arm to fit through.

67. O'Brien: OK Mark what were you saying?

68. Mark: The hat should go on the dad what the boy's wearing. The skirt what the girl's wearing should go on the mum and the dad should keep the blue jumper and just cut it um trim it.

69. Voice: The dad's

70. Rhianna: (calling above the noise) Can I say something about the dad

71. O'Brien: Are you saying that Emma Chichester-Clark who's done the pictures has shown that the clothes are not very successful that the aunt has made?

72. Anthea: No (*in the tone of one saying no they're not very successful*)

73. Ben: Look at the dog

74. Rhianna: (calling) I've just realised something!

75. O'Brien: Just a minute. Naomi first then Rhianna. Naomi?

76. Naomi: One sleeve is long and one sleeve is short.

77. O'Brien: So is that successful is she //

78. Rhianna: That's what I was gong to say //

79. O'Brien: Is she successful at making clothes do you think?

80. Anthea: No!

81. O'Brien: Can I keep going. (Reads) "My aunt Mary is very kind." OK Well so far we've had a fat aunt that Pat Thomson's made fun of. We've had one who has a fur coat that //

82. // Anthea: (calling out) Loves sewing! //

83. O'Brien: who loves sewing who's which Pat Clark has made fun of //

84. // Voices: hubbub //

85. // O'Brien: the kissing one P mad fun of. What about this one. "My aunt Mary is very kind." So it sounds as if she's going to be ...

86. Anthea: a good aunt!

87. O'Brien: Nice. A good aunt. Keep listening. //

88. // Voice: a good aunt

89. O'Brien: Keep listening and see if she surprises you. "There's only one thing wrong with her" Oh sorry "My aunt Mary is very kind. The only wrong the only thing wrong with her is my cousin Rodney. He wins medals for ballroom dancing" (continues reading aloud) So the aunt is kind. Is there a but in that picture?

My Aunt Mary is very kind. The only thing wrong with her is my cousin, Rodney. Rodney wins medals for ballroom dancing.

90. Voices: Y eae s

91. O'Brien: What's the problem?

92. Anthea: Her silly cousin. Like there's something wrong with him and he can't stop doing things to help.

93. O'Brien: HmmHmm. Does that seem like a bad thing to you or a good thing?

94. Chorus: A bad thing!

95. Rhianna: Bad and good.

96. O'Brien: OK Let's just listen to what you say about that. Rhianna?

97. Rhianna: The good part is that he's trying to help people, but the bad part is you don't want him around all the time doing everything for you so you can never do something yourself.

98. O'Brien: OK That sounds like a very sensible comment.

99. // Voice (boy): ...(inaudible) stuff

100. O'Brien: Naomi

101. Naomi: He has to be bad because he keeps tipping tea on the lawn.

102. O'Brien: Well he doesn't actually tip tea on the lawn, he hands it around

103. Naomi: Oh

104. O'Brien: It just means when they're sitting out there on the lawn he takes the tea around and says would you like as cup of tea

105. Voice: Yes

106. O'Brien: OK So it looks as if the aunt is fine but she is being blamed for having this polite son. //

107. //Steven: There's two teas. (*Referring to homophones, a recurring feature of our language program)*

108. O'Brien: Yes there are certainly two teas, but we're not going to do that now.

Hubbub of comment on the pictures, indistinguishable

109. O'Brien: "He slipped once and fell in the pond". Have a good look at the picture and see if Emma Clark is drawing something which P isn't telling you

Hubbub of comment on the pictures, indistinguishable

110. Steven: (*calling*) Someone's trying to grab him.

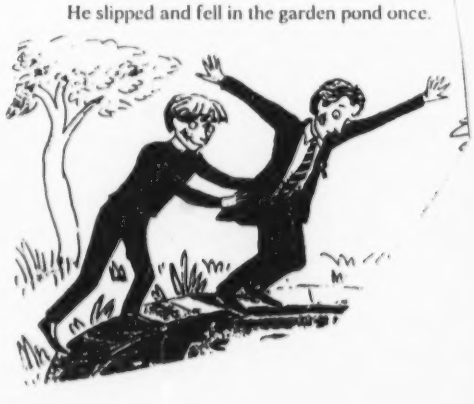
111. O'Brien: Stop. We've got two different ways of looking at this picture. What do you say's happening in the picture, Anthea?

112. Anthea: I say the big brother with the stone is pushing Rodney in. because he doesn't like him.

113. O'Brien: Steven, what were you saying about it?

He is always clean and neat. He likes being with grown-ups and handing round tea on the lawn.

He slipped and fell in the garden pond once.



114. Steven: That he's grabbing him so he doesn't fall in

115. O'Brien: We've got two completely different readings it's called of that picture. Could you, why do you think you're right, Anthea?

116. Anthea: They don't they don't like him so they think if they push him in the river pond something's going to happen to him so he's going to end really really good.

117. O'Brien: OK

118. Anthea: Instead of really, really polite, he's going to end up sort of in between. good and bad.

119. O'Brien: OK more like a real person, is that what you mean?

120. Anthea: Yeah.

121. O'Brien: Steven, do you think Anthea's right or do you want to argue for yours.

122. Steven: I probably think I am. He's grabbing him in because he's nice at putting the plates in. But he's bad at one thing.

123. O'Brien: What's he bad at?

124. Steven: Stopping other people doing things they want to do.

125. O'Brien: You're talking about what Rhianna's talking about. OK Well done. (*Continues reading aloud*) Jane what do you want to say?

126. Jane: Bad aunt //

127. //Steven: What's a skating rink?

128. O'Brien: In what way bad?

129. Jane: Um she orders things that you have to do like wash your hands before you eat

130. O'Brien: Umhm. Which is a perfectly normal thing to do isn't it?

131. Voice calling: I do! *then hubbub about washing hands*

132. O'Brien: Do you notice Of course you do! Yes a bit bossy, but isn't reasonable //

133. //Voice: Yeah //

134. // O'Brien: to remind kids about washing hands?

135. Jane: My mum just tells me to do it

136. O'Brien: Of course she does. //

//Hubbub continues

137. //O'Brien: So here she is

// Comment about not washing hands after the toilet

We have to wash our hands all the time. Her kitchen is like a hospital. Her floor is like a skating rink.

No children are allowed in her best room.

138. O'Brien: He'd be a very foolish boy because he could finish up sick couldn't he. Do you notice that Pat Thomson is trying to make out that it's bad or sort of horrible to try and get people to wash their hands. So she's trying to make you think that something that we think is really ordinary is bad, I think. *(Continues reading).*

139. Anthea and others: Bossy. Bossy

140. O'Brien: Making out her to be very bossy. Maree?

(inaudible)

141. O'Brien: Shout Maree

142. Maree: Well she can't make them wash their hands if they don't want to.

143. O'Brien: Well I s'pose not. She might stand there and hold their hands under the water mightn't she?

144. Maree: Yeah

Hubbub of talk about hands

145. O'Brien: Exactly. (*Tape player turned off; lunch time*)

Resumption after lunch

146. O'Brien: What would I do without you people? I don't know. I'd be absolutely lost. OK We've got back to *Be.* OK. So there's aunt Jean, you have to wash your hands all the time so we agreed you said that it's clean and sensible to wash your hands, her kitchen is like a hospital her floor is like a skating rink, no children are allowed in her best room (*continues reading*)//

// *Inaudible comment*

147. O'Brien: (*continues reading a few words*). Maree what do you want?

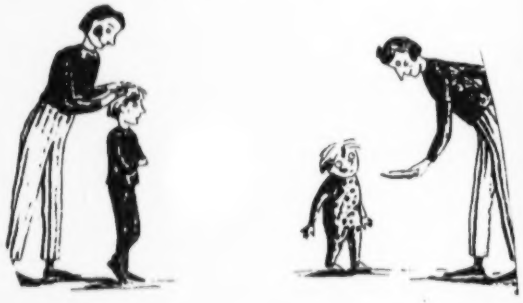
148. Maree: Well, (*largely inaudible anecdote about sharing something at home because they've only got one*)

149. O'Brien: Well that's fair enough isn't it.

(*Hubbub and one voice over the top, but indecipherable)*

150. O'Brien: OK The next aunt. (*reads aloud*) //

Aunt Susan always forgets her glasses.



//laughter

151. Maree: That's funny.

152. O'Brien: (*continues reading aloud*) //

//laughter

153. O'Brien: Do you think this is real or is this something a bit different? Tell me what. //

154. // Rhianna: (*calling*) It might be real because some people //

155. //Maree: (*calling*) It's a bit mean

156. //O'Brien: Excuse me. Sorry, Anthea?

157. Anthea: It might be real because some people forget to put their glasses on because they can't see properly and they might keep on doing things wrong to the ?walls? and kids.

"Hello, little poppet," she says to my big brother. She once put a saucer of milk on the floor for my little sister, tried to feed the television with fish food, and thought the cat was her scarf.

158. O'Brien: OK Mark, what do you want to say? (Mark has just made a comment about his father's blindness)

159. Mark: He's blind.

160. O'Brien: And so he needs his glasses?

161. Mark: Yeah. And sometimes he doesn't wear them and //

//(*Hubbub of comment, including Steven's voice)*

162. O'Brien: Excuse me, Mark's talking

163. Mark: One eye's blind and one's all blurry.

164. O'Brien: So he can you imagine your dad making some funny mistakes like this if he didn't have his glasses on?

165. Mark: Yes.

166. O'Brien: So you can believe it might be perfectly OK to be like that if you had bad eyesight. Maree what do you want to say?

167. Maree: She's a bit mean of using the cat *Here*

(Hubbub of talk about Christmas trees)

168. O'Brien: Please stop talking about Christmas and start listening. Did. First question. I'm hoping to get some fantastic answers. First question. Did Pat Thomson surprise you in the way she wrote about the aunts?

169. Voices: Yes. ... No.

170. O'Brien: Now, remember I got you to say, tell me some of the aunts you think she'll put in the book and you drew about four different aunts. Did she surprise you?

169. Anthea: No

170. O'Brien: OK. Anthea, what's your answer?

171. Anthea: No, aunts could be like that. You never know.

172. O'Brien: OK Can you stop for a moment Anthea, please. Anthony, I need to remind you that it's looking around this way, turned around this way, body around this way, facing around this way (waits for a few seconds for Anthony to move) Right. Did she surprise you in the aunts she chose.

173. Voices: No // Yes

174. O'Brien: OK. Who could say a little more about that? I'll come back to you in a moment, Steven. Umm, Christy.

175. Christy: I think writers always write books about mean aunts.

176. O'Brien: Can you talk really loudly so it comes out.

177. Christy: They usually write about mean aunts but they're usually very nice, because mine is.

178. O'Brien: Yeah, my aunts were lovely. Most of my aunts are dead now, and all my sisters are aunts, of course, they are aunts to my children, and they're wonderful aunts.

179. Voices attesting to the goodness of their own aunts.

180. Student: My (inaudible) got heaps and heaps of sisters.

181. O'Brien: Well, you're very lucky. Now, listen, who said they were surprised at the aunts that Steven, you said that, why. Would you explain that.

182. Steven: I drawed some mean witches (aunt???) and the witch is mean but I didn't draw a witch. I drawed something mean..

183. O'Brien: You did draw something mean and something a bit scary. So you weren't really surprised. You drew similar things to the things to the things Pat chose.

184. Steven: She drew a witch and I didn't; I drawed a (inaudible)

She lives in a cottage down a lane with strange herbs hanging from the kitchen beams.

185. O'Brien: Oh, I see. OK. Maree?

186. Maree: It's not fair that Sammy's dad died (her older sister) because he died of cancer.

I'm almost sure Aunt Charlotte is a witch

187. O'Brien: Oh, did he. Well, that must have been very sad.

188. Maree: That's when Sammy moved to our house.

189. O'Brien: Right. Uhuh. So hasn't Sammy been your sister for a long time. Only for a short time?

190. Maree: No

191. O'Brien: A long time. OK. All right.

192. Anthea: Ms O'Brien //

193. O'Brien: // Now these here's another question

194. Anthea: I've got something really funny about this page //

195. O'Brien: // Yes

196. Anthea: About that bit. It looks like she is a witch because the roof looks like a garden sort of thing with flowers growing from it.

197. O'Brien: Yes That's supposed to be inside.

198. Anthea: I know but she might have changed the roof into that so she could //

199. O'Brien: // OK Here's the next question. You are an aunt.

200. Voice: No I'm not.

201. O'Brien: Pretending. Pretending. (over quiet hubbub about pretending to be an aunt) that you are an aunt. How would you feel about the way Pat Thomson's written about you, about people like you in the book? Can we have hands up for answers. Stacey? this is Stacey Reilly, aged?

202. Stacey: Seven.

203. O'Brien: 7? Go!

204. Stacey: Not nice!

205. O'Brien: Could you explain that Stacey?

206. Stacey: She says that the aunts are mean, she says that they don't let her like the aunt that says that children aren't allowed in her special room! It's not fair. My aunts aren't like that.

207. O'Brien: Right, Stacey. That's beautifully explained. Rhianna would you //

208. Steven: // My aunt doesn't let me go in her special room!

209. O'Brien: She might have a reason for it. I've just realised! Rhianna would you explain? You are an aunt. How would you feel about being written about like this in a book?

210. Rhianna : I wouldn't feel very nice because something I would and something I wouldn't because somethings she's written nice things about and some of it hasn't so I wouldn't be very //

211. O'Brien: // Could give me an example of something nice she's written?

212: Rhianna : Well she likes to make her own clothes and she doesn't have to buy much, only a couple of things.

213. O'Brien: True. Very true. Plus the recycling you noticed was a good thing didn't you?

214. Rhianna: Yeah ... yeah

215. O'Brien: Christy. How about you. How would you feel?

216. Christy: Really upset. Because aunties are never hardly mean like that.

217. O'Brien: Right OK. //

218. // Steven: My auntie ... (inaudible)

219. O'Brien: Can you wait? Mark what did you meant to say?

210. Mark: My aunties don't tell me to wash my hands every minute of the day.

211. O'Brien: And did you notice in the picture that she's looking at their hands through a magnifying glass to specially inspect them.

212. Voice: No! (Delighted giggle)

213. O'Brien: I just noticed that a minute ago. Steven. What's your answer. How would feel about the way it was written, you're written about?

214. Steven: Not nice.

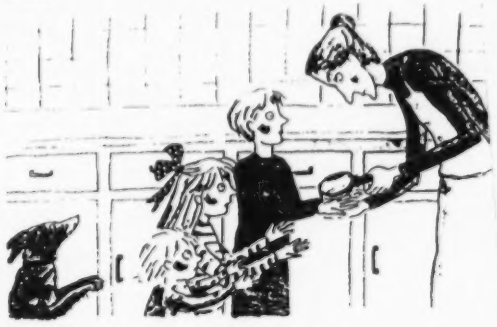
215. O'Brien: Why not?

216. Steven: Tell us off and say that we're mean.

217. Ben.: I'm going to tell my aunt that that book's going to be written.

218. O'Brien: Laughs. (Hubbub of comment about aunts in general ... indistinguishable) Maree, what do you want to say? I love the way Maree listens and thinks and answers. At five years of age she's excellent. What a thinker!

Aunt Jean is really fussy about her house. We hate going there.



219. Maree: When they have too much aunts that's funny.

220. O'Brien: You think so do you? What because its ... why ... what's funny about it, Maree?

221. Maree: Because there's too much aunts //

222. // (indistinguishable talk)

// 223. O'Brien: Excuse me. It's hard to hear. Go Maree.

224. Maree: and when you have too much aunts they have to kiss you every time they come

225. Steven: (Sotto voce) That's true

226. O'Brien: Is that really or is that what Pat Thomson says?

227. Maree: That's what really happens.

228. O'Brien: Do your aunts kiss you a lot?

229. Stacey: So does the aunt in that (inaudible)

230. O'Brien: Yeah. The aunts in this book certainly kiss a lot. Right magic finger has to choose the person to make the last comment because we've just about spent enough time on this book I think.

231. Anthea: (sotto voce) Anthea Anthea Anthea

232. O'Brien: Oh! Go on.

233. Anthea: I don't think it would be very very nice because not all aunts are like that and I'd feel really, really, really bad if some ... (end of tape)

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